

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

# Sight & Sound



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**STILL BURNING AFTER 40 YEARS**

# THE WICKER MAN

**PLUS**

- PAOLO SORRENTINO'S 'THE GREAT BEAUTY' ● SLAVOJ ZIZEK ● EDDIE MARSAN
- CLAUDE SAUTET'S 'CLASSE TOUS RISQUES' ● WOODY ALLEN'S 'BLUE JASMINE'

# The Masters of Cinema Series

## SEPTEMBER NEW RELEASES

# VAN GOGH

One of the greatest films by one of the finest directors of the second half of the 20th century, Maurice Pialat's *Van Gogh* represents an ambitious and crowning achievement in its portrayal of the master painter's final weeks of life, almost exactly one-hundred years earlier.

### SPECIAL FEATURES

- Gorgeous new restoration of the film, appearing in 1080p on the Blu-ray • New and improved optional English subtitles • *Van Gogh* (1965) — a short, early documentary about the painter, by Maurice Pialat • A 10-minute video interview with Pialat from 1991 • A 50-minute video interview with Pialat from 1992 • Original theatrical trailer • Video interviews with actors Jacques Dutronc and Bernard Le Coq, director of photography Emmanuel Machuel, and editor Yann Dedet • Deleted scenes • 36-page booklet containing a new and exclusive essay by critic Sabrina Marques, Jean-Luc Godard's letter to Pialat after seeing the film, followed by Godard's tribute to Pialat upon the director's passing in 2003; copious newly translated interviews with Maurice Pialat; images of Pialat's canvasses; rare imagery; and more!

On Blu-ray and DVD from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013



# A TIME TO LOVE AND A TIME TO DIE

Douglas Sirk — the master of the Hollywood melodrama — turns back to his native Germany at the time of the Second World War for the film that would stand as his penultimate American feature: *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*. A CinemaScope production staged on a grand scale, Sirk's picture nevertheless pulsates with an intimacy that has known longing for too long, and seethes with the repression of emotions poised to explode like bombs.

### SPECIAL FEATURES

- Gorgeous 1080p presentation of the film in its original 2.35:1 CinemaScope aspect ratio • English SDH subtitles for the hard of hearing • Optional isolated music & effects track • *Of Tears and Speed: According to Jean-Luc Godard* — a 12-minute, visually annotated recitation of Jean-Luc Godard's seminal essay on Sirk's film • 19-minute video interview with Wesley Strick • *Imitation of Life (Mirage of Life): A Portrait of Douglas Sirk* — a 49-minute film portrait from 1984, directed by Daniel Schmid • The original trailer for the film • 36-page booklet containing the complete text of Jean-Luc Godard's essay on the film, writings from critic Tag Gallagher on the film and Sirk's career in general, and more.

On Blu-ray from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013

# LA NOTTE

One of the masterworks of 1960s cinema, *La notte* [The Night] marked yet another development in the continuous stylistic evolution of its director, Michelangelo Antonioni — even as it solidified his reputation as one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. *La notte* is Antonioni's "Twilight of the Gods", but composed in cinematic terms. Examined from a crane-shot, it's a sprawling study of Italy's upper middle-class; seen in close-up, it's an x-ray of modern man's psychic desolation.

### SPECIAL FEATURES

- New 1080p presentation of the film in its original 1.85:1 aspect ratio with previously censored sequences restored for the first time • Optional English SDH • Original Italian theatrical trailer • 56-page booklet with an essay by film-critic and scholar Brad Stevens, and the transcript of a lengthy Q&A conducted in 1961 with Antonioni upon the film's release

On Blu-ray from 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013



October: *Red River* (Hawks) • *Dr Mabuse De Spieler* (Lang) • *Late Mizoguchi* - eight films

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##### Long arm of the lore

Forty years on, despite studio maulings and disappearing prints, *The Wicker Man* still exercises an uncanny grip on the imagination. Director Robin Hardy remembers the making and marring of a pagan classic. By **Vic Pratt**

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##### Mind the gaps

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of movies? Slavoj Žižek knows – and he won't stop talking about it. In *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* he uncovers more dark secrets from the dream factory. By **Sam Davies**

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Watchful, humble, helplessly professional, Eddie Marsan has become one of those actors who directors just love to cast. By **David Thomson**

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The American filmmaker and teacher, legendary for his formal rigour and devotion to 16mm, talks about digital technology, 'slow' art, and manipulating the image in the interests of reality. By **Nick Bradshaw**



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**COVER**

The original poster image for *The Wicker Man*. Retouched by DawkinsColour

**NEXT ISSUE**

on sale 8 October

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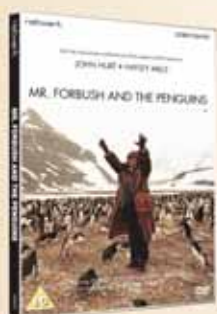


**And online this month** Chris Sullivan's epic animation *Consuming Spirits* | blissed-out SoCal non-fiction *Only the Young* | reports from Venice, Encounters and more [bfi.org.uk/sightandsound](http://bfi.org.uk/sightandsound)



### The Courtneys of Curzon Street

A masterly drama of love across the social divide, *Courtneys* chronicles the changing fortunes of an aristocratic family over three generations.



**Mr. Forbush and the Penguins**  
One man's journey of self-discovery in the frozen isolation of Antarctica starring **John Hurt** and **Hayley Mills** and penned by **Anthony Shaffer** (*Sleuth*, *Frenzy*).



**The Breaking of Bumbo**  
Sexy Swinging Sixties-set comedy starring **Richard Warwick** and **Joanna Lumley** about a royal guardsman who falls for luscious pacifist Susie.



**Edgar Wallace Presents: Circus of Fear**  
**Christopher Lee** and **Klaus Kinski** star in this thrilling tale of a police officer who traces a bank robber to a circus and arrives to witness a series of brutal murders.



**Not Now Comrade**  
Uproarious '70s British farce starring **Leslie Phillips**, **Roy Kinnear**, **Windsor Davies**, **June Whitfield** and **Ian Lavender**.



**Red Wagon**  
The story of an orphan child who sets out to fulfil his dream of owning a circus. Starring **Charles Bickford**, **Greta Nissen** and **Jimmy Hanley** in his screen debut.



**Dandy Dick**  
A vicar becomes involved in a horse-doping scandal in this '30s farce starring comic genius **Will Hay**.

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# Editorial Nick James



## STATE OF MIND

In the early days of the UK Film Council, during an interview I had with chief executive John Woodward about their cultural priorities, an exchange took place that I've had cause lately to recall. This was when the UKFC chairman was the bullish, no-nonsense director Alan Parker, and the organisation's agenda was clearly populist and commercial. Given Parker's occasional attacks on the likes of Peter Greenaway, I asked Woodward if he thought there was any place for intellectuals in UK filmmaking. Woodward, with his trademark stonewalling politician's style, answered with a question of his own: "What is an intellectual?"

I cite this moment not because Woodward couldn't answer either his question or mine if he wanted to (and to be honest I can't remember what I said in reply) but because his question-as-answer is typical of the generally evasive British attitude towards thinking about culture. In most of Europe the idea that people with the facility and inclination to think deeply about the world and our place in it might not be relevant to such a key medium as cinema would be considered ridiculous. Here, however, many UK journalists demean anyone who wants to talk about culture with the term 'the chattering classes'.

In saying this, I'm not suggesting that successful British filmmakers are in any way less thoughtful than those from elsewhere, only that the film scene here has tended to provide fewer opportunities for the kind of ruminative filmmaking perhaps exemplified by our recent essay film season at BFI Southbank. This month, however, it happens that three films with a distinctly intellectual focus are being released; two of them happen to be from the UK and are essays in form. Since one of them, Sophie Fiennes's *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, featuring Slavoj Žižek, featured on this page last month, I won't dwell on it too much. But all three suggest that low- and medium-budget cinema is finding fresh ways to deal with complex subject matter.

John Akomfrah's *The Stuart Hall Project* is a tribute to a figure who is central to the way the New Left looked at culture in the second half of the 20th Century – so much so that for me, as an editor who has published Hall but hasn't had more than a couple of phone conversations with him, it was a shock, seeing the film, to realise the extent to which the presence of his face and voice in the British media was intrinsic to my own political and cultural

*In most of Europe the idea that people with the facility and inclination to think deeply about the world might not be relevant to such a key medium as cinema would be considered ridiculous*



education. Watching Akomfrah's typically poetic and evocative use of archive material I felt as if Hall had been, without my realising it, my own internalised voice of political reason. To see it is to experience the living answer to Woodward's question.

The contrast between Stuart Hall and the philosopher Žižek couldn't be more extreme. Where you feel Hall is as careful about what he doesn't say as what he does, Žižek is seemingly incontinent. The pleasure and difficulty of watching him comes as much from provocation and irritation as from any conviction that something hidden is being revealed.

One image from *The Pervert's Guide* is of Žižek lying on a bed similar to the one Travis Bickle uses during the phase of *Taxi Driver* where his mind is focusing on his cockamamie mission to save Jodie Foster's child prostitute. It's perhaps not that strange that Žižek should choose to mirror Bickle lying down while airing his constantly excited views. But I am curious that the image matches another from our third film, Margarethe von Trotta's *Hannah Arendt*.

'Biopic' might be as demeaning a misnomer, where this film is concerned, as 'chattering classes'. The film is mainly concerned with the German-Jewish philosopher Arendt's fascination with the trial in Israel of Adolf Eichmann, one of the primary architects of the Final Solution. Yet primarily *Hannah Arendt* is a conventional 'one woman alone' melodrama, which depicts the precariousness of friendship and academic life in the face of inconvenient truths. What's unusual is that the film achieves many moments where the process of thinking is represented as drama. I'm particularly taken by the scene in which Barbara Sukowa, chain-smoking as Arendt, lies down on a couch to figure out how she can see off the cascade of virulent criticism that her description of Eichmann as a banal bureaucrat has caused. The film is rigorous enough to enable you to imagine exactly what Arendt is thinking, and Sukowa herself is brilliant. But is this how we see our intellectuals: not listening to the person on the couch, but needing to lie there themselves? ☹

IN THE FRAME

## A SERIES OF STUMBLES



Draughtsman's contract: Richard Williams (with Vincent Price) at work on *The Thief and the Cobbler*

How one young animator drew rich inspiration from the divergent yet complementary styles of Norman McLaren and Richard Williams

**By Mikey Please**

A series of stumbles can look like running. That's how it feels to try to become good at something new. We are forever tripping up, delaying the moment of impact just long enough to trip up all over again. Awkward, gawky and bleeding at the knees, but somehow moving forwards.

This to me is good learning: embracing a string of screw-ups from which you can skim some sense of progress off the top. In the moment, it might feel like nonsense, but looking back you can see the journey.

I didn't study animation in a formal setting. What I did have was a book. *The book on how to animate: The Animator's Survival Kit* by Richard Williams. The title is misleading. It won't teach you how to convert your inkwell into a nutritional stew, or splint your aching fingers with a pencil and rubber band. No. It is the Manual of Movement. For the believers, it is the Bible on how to bring the inanimate to life.

In an art form this young, no set of rules can be definitive. But these principles, gathered from half a century working with industry legends such as Ken Harris and Milt Kahl, distilled with Williams's wit and craft of hand, comes pretty close. Williams's own work, from his first film *The Little Island* (1958) to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), is a testament to the honing of a craft. Learning with little steps, from project to project, all the way up to absolute mastery.

Animation continues to unveil its secrets. We know when it works: *Bambi* on the ice, *Mrs. Incredible* – *Elastigirl* – playing hot-potato with a telephone. We are still unearthing the mechanics of *why* it works. They are a set of physical laws unto themselves. Making something look lifelike will not necessarily make it look alive.

Like the annoying collector who buys the paint palette but ignores the painting, I'm often more interested by what goes on behind the scenes. Animated films can be a medley of several practices: music, mathematics,

**Australia:  
Shifting Sands**

This BFI Southbank season, from 19 September-8 October, explores how landscape has informed Australian cinema, and the ways indigenous people have been seen on screen, through films including *'Walkabout'* (right) and *'The Last Wave'*.



**Cambridge Film Festival**

This year's festival opens on 19 September with *'Hawking'* (right), a film about the life of Stephen Hawking, which the distinguished physicist will attend. Among the many intriguing strands is a programme entitled *'Eccentric Britain'*, on 27 September, celebrating the work of the British documentarist John Samson, director of *'Dressing for Pleasure'* and *'Arrows'*.



ON OUR  
RADAR





Rabbit, run: *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* shows Richard Williams's absolute mastery of the form

photography, performance and many others. For my own practice, hand in hand with the science of movement comes optical trickery.

Cue segue to Norman McLaren, painting picture and soundtrack by hand directly on to filmstrips, running them through Steenbeck editing machines. Norman had synaesthesia, a neural cross-wiring that caused him to involuntarily visualise colour and movement when listening to music, a true smooshing of sight and sound. Hence he was an experimenter, searching for ways to express this sensory crossover through technical combinations of his own.

He discovered his own set of principles over 60 short films, and they sit parallel with, but not contrary to, Williams. He compressed time directly on to filmstrip, showed echoes of movement in Muybridge-like overlays and made soundtracks without making a sound – his own dialect of the same language.

McLaren and Williams have much in common, both coming from a painting background and being frustrated by its limitations. They share an absurdist humour and playful timing, sheer ambition and dedication to deciphering the

language of movement. Both were adamant that animation is not a genre but a technique.

So it was that these two maestros, and their divergent but complementary approaches to animation, were the signposts on my own clumsy stumble towards trying to become good at something new.

I had grand plans to pontificate about this with Richard when I got to meet him earlier this year. Thankfully, he skipped the bullshit, got excited about the concluding episodes of *Breaking Bad*, and we spoke about that instead. "What will Walt do? Will he get away with it? Perhaps he'll start a secret life on witness protection as the Dad in *Malcolm in the Middle*?"

I'm glad we did, and happy to say that we both get to find out, very shortly. ☺

**i** A Richard Williams retrospective will show at the Encounters short film and animation festival in Bristol (17-22 September). Apps of *The Animator's Survival Kit* and *McLaren's Workshop* from the National Film Board of Canada are available for iPad. *The Jolly Dot*, an animated tribute to both animators, can be seen at [mikeyplease.co.uk](http://mikeyplease.co.uk).

## ANATOMY OF A MOVIE BLUE JASMINE

30% A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)

20% Alice (1990)

18% Interiors (1978)

13% Another Woman (1988)

10% Scenes from a Marriage (1973)

3% Husbands and Wives (1992)

2% The Passion of Anna (1969)

2% A Woman Under the Influence (1974)

1% Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1974)

1% It Happened One Night (1934)



## QUOTE OF THE MONTH JEAN COCTEAU



"Emotion resulting from a work of art is only of value when it is not obtained by sentimental blackmail."

### Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film

The second BFI Compendium, following last year's '39 Steps to the Genius of Hitchcock', ties in with the BFI's major celebration of the Gothic this winter. The multi-authored book features contributors such as Guillermo del Toro, Mark Gatiss, Glen Duncan, Kim Newman, Charlie Higson and Marina Warner, and is available now online from BFI Filmstore, priced £15.



### The Epic of Everest

The BFI National Archive gala at this year's London Film Festival is a new restoration of John Noel's film of the 1924 Everest expedition. The film screens at Odeon Leicester Square as part of the festival on 18 October, and opens nationwide on the same date.



### Elizabeth Price

The inaugural exhibition of the Focal Point gallery's new space, at The Forum, Southend-on-Sea, will present a large-scale video installation from artist-filmmaker Elizabeth Price. The new piece will draw on historic slide imagery of the sun and is the artist's first solo exhibition since winning the Turner Prize last year.



## NEW RELEASES

**DRAKE DOREMUS  
BREATHE IN**

Intimate, intelligent and powerfully moving, this riveting tale of forbidden love and suburban malaise from the acclaimed director of Like Crazy features captivating, career-best performances from lead actors Felicity Jones and Guy Pearce.

**"Intimate and involving.... directed and performed with subtle insight"**

Trevor Johnston, Sight & Sound

AVAILABLE ON DVD, BLU-RAY & ON DEMAND 7 OCTOBER

**SARAH POLLEY  
STORIES WE TELL**

At once an exploration of the function of storytelling, the elusive nature of truth and what it means to be part of a family, this funny, profound and poignant documentary from Oscar®-nominated writer/director Sarah Polley is one of the most original films of the year.

**"As suspenseful as any drama and as smart as a thesis"**

Emma Simmonds, The Arts Desk

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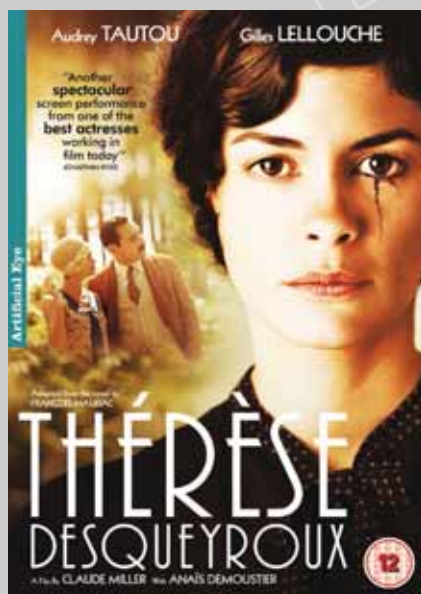
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## Artificial Eye

[artificial-eye.com](http://artificial-eye.com)

## New Releases

**Claude Miller  
Thérèse  
Desqueyroux**

Revolving around a subtle, nuanced and resonant performance by Audrey Tautou, this adaptation of François Mauriac's classic novel recreates his breath-taking tale of an intelligent woman forced to enter an arranged marriage in rural 20s France in lavish cinematic style.

**"Visually sumptuous... with great performances all round"**

Nick Roddick, Sight & Sound

AVAILABLE NOW ON DVD, BLU-RAY & ON DEMAND

**Andrea Segre  
Shun Li and  
The Poet**

A tender, touching portrait of the unlikely yet intimate bond between a Chinese immigrant worker and a Slavic fisherman nicknamed 'The Poet' that has won over festival audiences across the world and hailed its director as one of the most exciting new voices in contemporary world cinema.

**"Haunting and affecting with visual poetry to spare"**

Mark Kermode, The Observer

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# THE BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

With vampires and folkies, stories from Mexico, the Philippines and Yorkshire, the BFI LFF 2013 is as multifarious as ever

Eclecticism and diversity are as ever the watchwords for this year's BFI London Film Festival, which runs from 9-20 October. A strong competition line-up includes new films by Catherine Breillat, Jonathan Glazer, Clio Barnard, Richard Ayoade and Pawel Pawlikowski. There are plenty of others that we'll be excited to see, such as *Of Good Report*, a controversial South African film directed by Jahmil X.T. Qubeka, about a teacher's obsession with a pupil. We at S&S are very proud to be presenting Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* as the *Sight & Sound* Gala screening on Saturday 19 October. And as well as new films, let's not forget those restored classics the LFF has long championed – this year Thorold Dickinson's *Gaslight*, Nicholas Ray's *The Lusty Men*, Luchino Visconti's *Sandra*, among many others. To help guide you through the international cornucopia, the *Sight & Sound* editorial team has selected 12 films we've been fortunate enough to catch at previous festivals. 6



See [bfi.org.uk/sightandsound](http://bfi.org.uk/sightandsound) for further recommendations and festival coverage



## S&S GALA SCREENING

**Only Lovers Left Alive** Jim Jarmusch brings his characteristically dry, faintly melancholy wit to this funny, stylish variation on the vampire genre.

## S&S RECOMMENDS



### Blue is the Warmest Colour

Abdellatif Kechiche's Palme d'Or winner sits in the rich tradition of French drama about love and lust.



### Camille Claudel 1915

Bruno Dumont's best film yet, with Juliette Binoche in the starker kind of role that made her reputation.



### Exhibition

Joanna Hogg's mysterious and singular third feature observes the break-up of a relationship.



### Heli

A rigorously constructed, painfully evocative film about Mexican drug-gang violence, from Amat Escalante.



### Inside Llewyn Davis

This heartfelt study of the Greenwich Village folk scene is in the vein of the Coens' best work.



### Like Father, Like Son

A slowburn tearjerker from Kore-eda Hirokazu, whose direction of children is always a marvel.



### The Missing Picture

Rithy Panh's film asserts memory and creativity over a regime that attempted to destroy both.



### Norte, The End of History

Lav Diaz's film grapples with big themes, but keeps them rooted in the specifics of Philippine society.



### The Selfish Giant

Clio Barnard's film finds a striking lyricism in the story of two boys growing up in a Yorkshire town.



### Story of My Death

Albert Serra's inventive and hypnotic film imagines a meeting between Dracula and Casanova.



### Stranger by the Lake

There's an almost pagan feel to the images in Alain Guiraudie's film, a mixture of beauty and dread.



### A Touch of Sin

A hard-edged, well-engineered satire of China's massive economic expansion from Jia Zhangke.



# DRAMATIC SPECTACLES

The wearing of glasses in films, particularly broken ones, suggests vulnerability and the primacy of intellect over physicality



**By Hannah McGill**

Broken spectacles still in place over eyes make for a powerful motif. The screaming nurse in shattered and bloodied pince-nez

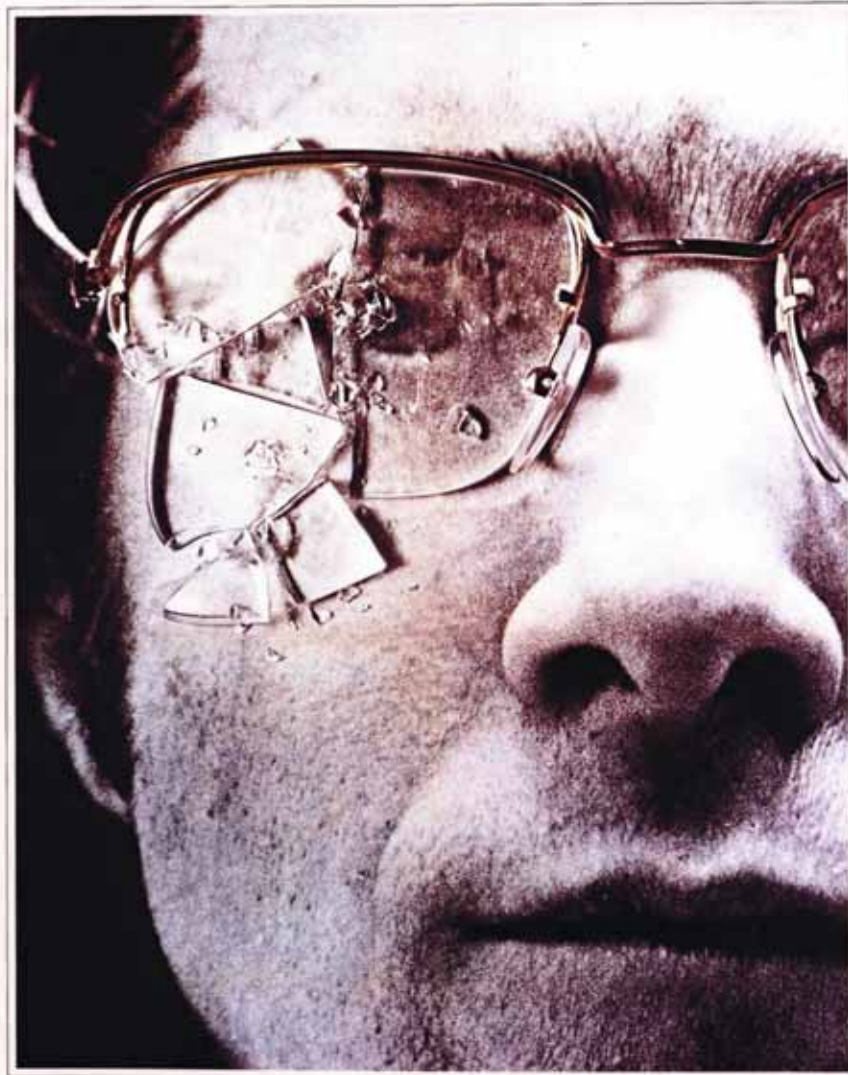
rates second only to the imperilled baby carriage as an indelible takeaway from the Odessa Steps massacre sequence in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* (1971) made an icon out of Dustin Hoffman in smashed specs, not least by deploying the image

on its poster; that the 2011 remake directed by Rod Lurie copied the shot for its own publicity indicated that its impact was undimmed, or at least that the visual idea was usefully familiar, even to a generation of moviegoers who didn't know the original film. Indeed, the image was also lifted for a poster for Tyler Perry's 2009 ensemble musical/melodrama/romantic comedy/whatever those things are that he makes, *I Can Do Bad all by Myself*.

Also compounded in the iconography of busted glasses are Bill Foster, the white-collar vigilante played by Michael Douglas in *Falling Down* (1992); Harry Bemis, the unfortunate bibliophile played by Burgess Meredith in the celebrated 1959 *Twilight Zone* episode 'Time Enough at Last'; and the put-upon Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*, played by Hugh Edwards in the 1963 film and by Danuel Pipoly in the 1990 version. Younger audiences might predominantly associate iconic eyewear

with another English schoolboy, Harry Potter. Though Harry's glasses tend to be preternaturally hardwearing, it's an early indicator of his friend Hermione's intimidating resourcefulness that she knows a spell to fix them when Harry breaks them on the Hogwarts Express in the early scenes of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001).

Doubtless the image of broken eyeglasses resonates partly for the same reason that the eyeball-slicing scene in Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) endures so: the queasiness stirred by the juxtaposition of a soft eyeball with a sharp implement must be as close to universal as any predicted audience response could be. The individual still wearing his or her smashed glasses is in a situation so dire that he or she can't or won't protect his or her eyes. But there's more to the unsettling power of the idea than just glass-near-eye. Spectacles indicate the triumph of human ingenuity over



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Tyler Perry spoofed the iconic *Straw Dogs* poster

*The queasiness stirred by the juxtaposition of a soft eyeball with a sharp implement is as universal as a response could be*



Michael Douglas as Bill Foster in *Falling Down*

Shards in your eyes: Hoffman's character's glasses provide a clear indicator of his unmanliness



nature's defects – a step towards cyborg living – but also the vulnerability of the human creature unable to function effectively without a fragile manmade device to improve his or her chances.

In its protagonist David Sumner, *Straw Dogs* gives us a man whose bespectacled state – like that of Superman's alter ego, Clark Kent – provides a clear visual indicator of his unmanliness. David's priorities are intellectual, not physical; he needs other men both to renovate his home and – according to the troubling implication of the film's distinctly ambiguous 'rape' scene – to have sex with his wife.

Both Bill Foster in *Falling Down* and Harry Potter, in their different ways, represent defiant reinventions of the unmanly glasses-wearer. "The person in the books who wore the glasses was always the brainy one and it really irritated me," Harry Potter creator J.K. Rowling has said. "I wanted to read about a hero wearing glasses." Whether Bill Foster is a hero depends on perspective, but certainly his rebellion against life's petty injustices entails an aggressive rejection of the behaviour society expects from people who look like him.

The trope of the thinking person whose glasses represent self-imposed separation from carnal, animal spontaneity is commonly applied to female characters, too, via the removal of glasses and shaking loose of hair to reveal the fox beneath. *Now, Voyager* (1942) and *The Big Sleep* (1946) feature famous takes on this trope, which is so ingrained that it seems to have been parodied more than it was ever played straight. "It always works in the movies," says Gig Young in *That Touch of Mink* (1962), when removal of glasses and a bun leaves a plain secretary no less plain. Midge in *Vertigo* (1958), played by Barbara Bel Geddes, is a poignant example of the glasses wearer who is never seen clearly by the object of her desire, James Stewart's Scottie. Scottie is unamused – and cruel – when Midge clumsily jokes on their unaligned obsessions by painting a picture of her own pert, knowing, bespectacled face on the body of Carlotta Valdes, a long-dead prop in the plot to seduce and mislead him.

Glasses, of course, don't always indicate that a character sees everything clearly. Pince-nez feature in *Battleship Potemkin* prior to the massacre, when the ship's surgeon is called upon to verify the freshness of meat that the soldiers onboard refuse to eat. Peering through his glasses, the surgeon declares the meat good; but Eisenstein allows us to see from his perspective the maggots swarming upon it. The soldiers' rage triggers the rebellion that in turn draws down the massacre.

For the nurse killed on the Odessa Steps, as for Piggy in *Lord of the Flies*, the advantage over nature provided by spectacles becomes suddenly meaningless when social order breaks down. Henry Bemis in 'Time Enough at Last' endures less violence, but the intellectual's ultimate cruel irony: post-apocalypse, he finds himself alone with a wealth of books and uninterrupted time, but breaks the thick glasses without which he cannot read. In the kingdom of the blind, adjusted vision turns out to be no advantage at all – not when it's dependent on a medium as frail as glass. 📖

## THE FIVE KEY...

# GILBERT TAYLOR FILMS

The great British cinematographer, who died in August at the age of 99, enjoyed an illustrious career lasting more than half a century



By Michael Brooke

There must be something lurking in old-fashioned film chemistry that bestows such long lives on great British cinematographers.

How many fanboys who think that cinema began with *Star Wars* (1977) realise that the man who shot it started out as a camera assistant in the silent era "captivated by the magic smells of film stock, acetone and makeup"? Taylor's career (1929-94, with additional commercials thereafter) spanned much of film history, and included several milestones.



## 2 Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1963)

Taylor's reputation as a master of "bounced light" attracted Stanley Kubrick, who wanted the lighting for the war room incorporated in the set design. Despite an often stormy collaboration between two perfectionists, Taylor cited it as his proudest achievement.



## 4 Repulsion (1965)

Roman Polanski gambled a huge chunk of his tiny budget on Taylor's services, but his choice was amply justified: this terrifyingly claustrophobic experience, its perspectives constantly distorted by wide-angle lenses, is one of the most visually innovative of all horror films.



## 1 The Dam Busters (1955)

During World War II Taylor filmed German bombing raids for real, so was an obvious candidate to recreate them in the studio, as special effects photographer. The entire film was shot in black and white to make it easier to interpolate actual footage of Barnes Wallis's bouncing-bomb trials.



## 3 A Hard Day's Night (1964)

Taylor was faced with two challenges when shooting The Beatles' first film – a tight schedule and leads with no experience of hitting their marks. But by using multiple cameras and newly introduced zoom lenses, Taylor allowed them room to improvise, a freewheeling approach that suited the film to perfection.



## 5 Star Wars (1977)

George Lucas had little interest in cinematography, and so Taylor was given almost a free hand in designing the lighting. In doing so, he brought an unprecedented degree of hard-edged realism ("I wanted clarity because I don't think space is out of focus") to a genre that was normally scrubbed and pristine.

# SEX AND THE CITY

Kieran Evans discusses the importance of Liverpool, landscape and matter-of-fact sex in his feature debut *Kelly + Victor*

**By Ashley Clark**

Wales-born Kieran Evans has a background in documentary filmmaking, primarily with musical subject matter (including the 2003 Saint Etienne film *Finisterre*, and 2006's *Vashti Bunyan: From Here to Before*). His feature debut is *Kelly + Victor*, based on the 2002 novel by Niall Griffiths. It tells the story of a pair of twentysomethings (played by Antonia Campbell-Hughes and Julian Morris) who embark on a relationship punctuated, and increasingly defined by, dangerous sadomasochistic sex games. Evans turns potentially lurid subject matter into a meditative and poetic study of urban alienation, and it is perhaps the first British film since *Young Adam* (2002) to successfully meld a sensitive attitude to transgressive sexual behaviour with an engaging narrative and compassionate characters. Particularly striking is the way the natural landscapes around Liverpool are used as a dramatic counterpoint to the characters' physical and emotional constriction.

**Ashley Clark: You come from a documentary background, so what prompted your switch to fiction filmmaking?**

**Kieran Evans:** I like telling stories, whether documentary or narrative. I was trying to find something I could relate to, which said something different. I didn't want to make a zombie film or a gangster film, I didn't want to make a traditional British flick. Reading *Kelly + Victor* opened that door, and once it gripped me it didn't let go.

**AC: Did you know the author?**

**KE:** I met Niall many years ago. I was doing a series of short docs for BBC Wales and was asked what I'd like to make a short about. At the time Niall had just released *Grits* and his second book, *Sheepshagger*, was on its way. He has a distinctive Welsh voice, and we had a lot in common – our Welsh-Irish parentage is similar and we're both huge Liverpool fans – so I wanted to work with him. We started work on a short called *Wanderlust*, and we really bonded. I went on holiday and he sent me a proof of *Kelly + Victor*. I read it and loved it, so I was in from the very start. In the meantime I'd met a producer, Janine Marmot, who'd seen a lot of my shorts and docs and thought I should start working towards longer forms.

**AC: Despite the difficult subject matter you seem to have sought to engage with its more poetic, romantic moments.**

**KE:** I didn't want to get into social realism or anything like that. *Kelly and Victor* are like ghosts in their own city – almost invisible. They represent a generation of people whose hopes and dreams have been completely smashed.

**AC: Can you talk about the striking use of music in the film?**

**KE:** I was very anti-scoring. Not because I'm against it, but I felt this film was all about moods which could be generated from music that we found. The idea became that the mood could be set by the music that the character Victor



Kieran Evans: 'I didn't want to make a zombie film or a gangster film'

finds. When we were editing there were pieces that were becoming motifs; particularly music by a guy called Bill Ryder-Jones and a band called Geese. When I watched – for research purposes, obviously – films featuring a lot of sex, I found that a lot of music scoring the sex was almost chocolate-box stuff, running against what was happening. *Kelly + Victor* wasn't going to be a sweet love story, so I needed to find something that worked in terms of making the sex scenes feel unsettling.

**AC: There's a sadness to the film, but Victor is always looking for beauty in things, especially in Liverpool, which you shoot with real style and affection.**

*Kelly and Victor are like ghosts in their own city. They represent a generation of people whose dreams have been smashed*




Antonia Campbell-Hughes in *Kelly + Victor*


**KE:** Liverpool had to be at the heart of the film; we couldn't move this anywhere else. There's something magical about the place. When researching the film, a Scouser friend of mine took me to these amazing places far from the stereotypical view of the city. Ultimately we wanted to show a real Liverpool and show a beauty to it as well.

**AC: There's a pronounced contrast between urban and rural in the film.**

**KE:** Just five, ten minutes away from these incredible shiny new developments you can see nature and the overgrowth slowly creeping to the heart of the city. I'm amazed British film-makers, save for, say, Ben Wheatley, Shane Meadows, and Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights*, don't tend to use the landscape more. We tend to be trapped in the M25. When you travel north and you see these incredible landscapes, you realise it's one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. We need to use it more.

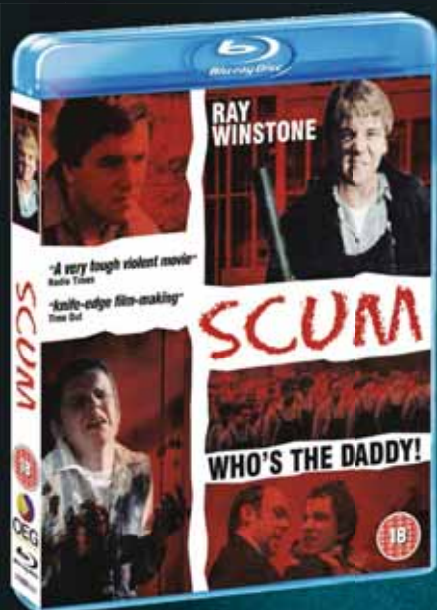
**AC: How did you approach the film's tricky sexual elements?**

**KE:** I still remember the day I watched Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, and how blown away I was by that experience and, even in the way he cut it, how truthful it was to the reality of sex. What we were trying to do was make it feel more real. For reference points I looked to a lot of Scandinavian cinema; their attitude to sex is more truthful and honest. If you look at the sex scenes in Lukas Moodysson's *Tillsammans* [*Together*] for example, they're all very matter-of-fact, and that's what we were after. 

 **Kelly + Victor is released in the UK on 20 September and is reviewed on page 62**



# FILM CLASSICS OUT FOR SEPTEMBER!



## The Daddy of all Blu-ray Releases!

### Scum - Digitally Remastered Blu-ray (1979)

Scum has been fully restored and graded from the original negatives by Pinewood Studios and includes the original audio mix and newly created 5.1 surround mix.

Ray Winstone stars in one of the most violent, explosive and controversial British films of all time. After assaulting a warder, young offender Carlin (Ray Winstone) is transferred to a tough British borstal where the staff decide to break him - with savage and relentless violence. At the same time, the existing 'Daddy' on Carlin's prison wing, Banks (John Blundell) - the thug who controls all the other inmates - sees the newcomer as a threat and singles him out for more vicious beatings. Now Carlin knows that there is only one way to survive. He must fight back, destroy Banks - and become the new 'Daddy' on the wing.

**Release Date - September 9<sup>th</sup> 2013**

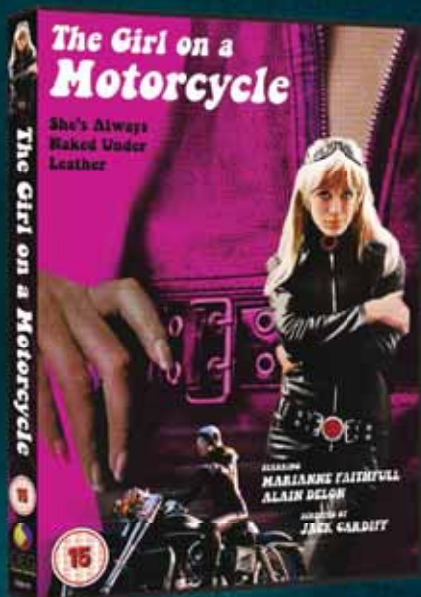
Available on Blu-ray

### Hangmen Also Die - Digitally Remastered (1943)

Hangmen Also Die has been fully restored and graded from the original negatives by Pinewood Studios. This classic Fritz Lang film is based on the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi Reich Protector of Czechoslovakia in 1942. Brian Donlevy stars as the assassin attempting to elude the Gestapo with co-stars Walter Brennan, Anna Lee, Dennis O'Keefe and Gene Lockhart.

**Release Date - September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013**

Available on DVD



### The Girl on a Motorcycle - Digitally Remastered (1968)

Filmed and directed by Oscar-winner Jack Cardiff, The Girl on a Motorcycle stars Marianne Faithfull and Alain Delon in this psychedelic masterpiece which has been restored.

**Release Date - September 9<sup>th</sup> 2013**

Available on DVD

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# FALLING FOR THE MOVIES

From slapstick tumbles to literal cliffhangers, the act of falling is key to the lure of film, but perhaps only weightlessness is truly cinematic



**By Mark Cousins**

A few days ago, I visited Frank Lloyd Wright's famous building Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, a massive modernist pagoda

home perched atop a waterfall, a beautiful Icarus building that should surely fall, but doesn't.

Then I drove to Niagara Falls, where a sea-a-second glides to a precipice and then collapses in a roar, in mist: gravity doing its thing, a demonstration piece of the sublime, just like Fallingwater is Lloyd Wright's demonstration piece. His building says, "Look what I can do." As I went to these places, I thought of another Falls, the Falls Road in Belfast, where my family comes from: how un-sublime, I reckoned, and then realised that it had its own kind of defiance and power.

And then I couldn't help thinking about falling and the movies. Laurel and Hardy walking along a street: we know there's a manhole and we know one of them will fall. Charlie Chaplin's falls. Donald O'Connor doing his 'Make 'Em Laugh' routine in *Singin' in the Rain*, falling all over the place. Wile E. Coyote dashing over a cliff, skidding to a halt in mid-air for a moment as he realises that he has run out of ground, then falling to the earth far below (sometimes overtaking falling rocks, which then squash him after his impact). Cinema has been great at such comic falling, in which we've seen hubris and, sometimes, when Chuck Jones was directing the Road Runner cartoons, abstraction.

But of course, the cliffhanger has been the staple of movie thrillers too. To fall is so visual and perilous. The house in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* was modelled on Fallingwater, says production designer Robert Boyle. He exaggerated its cantilever and used its horizontal, striated stonework to give Cary Grant a way of climbing it. The precariousness of Lloyd Wright's house fitted perfectly into the precariousness of Hitchcock's world. And think of Abel Gance's *La Roue*, in which a guy's life flashes before his eyes as he dangles from a cliff; or Hitchcock again, in *Saboteur*, in which Norman Lloyd hangs from the Statue of Liberty, held only by the threads of his sleeve, which slowly come undone; or James Stewart near the start of *Vertigo*, acting well outwith his diffident naturalistic range as he looks down to where he might fall; or Luke Skywalker falling: demises or the threat thereof, endings or premonitions of the end, the fall as the final fact of life, falling away from life.

Nicolas Roeg, Paul Mayersberg and Walter Tevis had David Bowie fall into life, in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. Like *E.T. The Extra-terrestrial*, it was an arrival. Both films showed that falls aren't necessarily leavings, that the mythology of falling can be about welcome and beginning,



Blue moon: the bike chase in *E.T. The Extra-terrestrial* expresses cinema's essence as lighter than light

as well as leaving and ending, about a new world not an old one. Played full throttle, this thought would make Elliott, not the creature in *E.T.*, the foreigner, the terra incognita which we get to know. You don't necessarily die when you fall, you can be born too, a cute reversal of polarities. Lloyd Wright's building is just as polar. It worships nature by building around its contours, its rocky formations, yet defies it, defies gravity, by cantilevering tray-like terraces out from the rock, over the falls.

So cinema has had its say on the comedy and tragedy of falling, its hubris and myth. What, though, about the beauty of it? I remember loving Peter Greenaway's 1980 film *The Falls*, in which he presents us with mini portraits of the lives of 92 people whose names begin with the letters 'Fall'. The beauty of this for me was the rigour, the grid, the mathematical way Greenaway approached the sci-fi genre.

But another British film is more beautiful about falling. Terence Davies' *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is a Rilke-like celebration of female, working-class Liverpool but, in the middle of it, there's a cut to men falling in slow motion through a roof as the title music from *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* plays. Davies has turned a violent act into a cinematic event whose gorgeousness is hard to explain. Perhaps the men look like water

*Falling in cinema can be funny, tragic, mythic and beautiful and we are all falling from grace and in and out of love*

falling. The water at Niagara Falls seems to move in slow motion. It is graceful, not panicked, like the men in Davies's film.

But as I write this, something is niggling at me. Yes, falling in cinema can be funny, tragic, mythic and beautiful, and maybe we are all falling from grace, from youth, in and out of love. But, to be honest, when I mentioned Chaplin a few paragraphs ago, I thought not about falling but about him playing at Hitler, bouncing an almost weightless world-balloon up into the air. Now *that's* cinematic. And so is Lamorisse's *The Red Balloon*, and Panahi's *The White Balloon*. And suddenly I'm not thinking of Donald O'Connor falling, but the camera rising as Gene Kelly dances in the rain, and all those endings in Hollywood movies when the camera seems to levitate, and the ending of *Grease* that I loved as a boy, where the car soars up into the air, and the chase scene in *E.T.* where the bike flies across the moon. Thinking of these moments, and loads of others, makes me realise that cinema is closer to flying than falling. Its lack of mass makes it so. It is, surely, lighter than life, as light as light. Its nimbleness in moving through time and space is the thing that bad directors don't get. It is Einstein, not Newton.

Having written this, I drive to the Yale University Art Gallery to see the building, which was designed by Louis Kahn. It's all concrete and brick, as solid as a Scottish castle, very Newtonian indeed. While I'm there, I have a look at the paintings. Cézannes galore, and Picassos too. Among the best are a trippy Kandinsky picture of a waterfall and two by Courbet, both of waterfalls. When you're thinking of something, you see it everywhere. 9

DEVELOPMENT TALE

## FILTH



Trigger fingers: James McAvoy brings a steeliness to the lead role, playing a foul-mouthed, bipolar, alcoholic, bigoted junkie cop called Bruce

The cumulative stress of bringing Irvine Welsh's book to the screen pushed its producer and director right to the very brink

**By Charles Gant**

When writer-director Jon S. Baird suggested to producer Ken Marshall that they should make a film out of Irvine Welsh's 1998 novel *Filth*, the latter soon discovered a few reasons for caution. The book – about a bipolar, alcoholic, bigoted junkie cop called Bruce – had already been optioned twice before, the first time by Miramax's UK offshoot of the time, HAL, which was shut down not long after screenwriter Dean Cavanagh delivered his first draft. Another British producer had tried to give the material more of a genre spin, but that version also failed to get made. Marshall, best known for his partnership with director Paul Andrew Williams on films such as *London to Brighton*, says: "It was great that Jon was enthusiastic about it, but if it had been shopped around a while then maybe it's already going to be dead in the water. I'd spoken to a few people, and one agent in particular told me,

"Don't touch this, it's not going to go anywhere."

The first task was to win the support of Welsh himself, which Marshall and Baird did by flying out to visit the Scottish author at his Dublin home in early 2009, convincing him of their vision over a lengthy pub crawl. But if Baird and Marshall thought it would be easy to find development money to fund a screenplay, they were in for a rude awakening.

"The material was difficult," says Marshall. "The economic climate was challenging. We weren't really flavours of the month anywhere. It was a story that inevitably would divide people." After a fruitless year-long search for development cash, the pair decided to write the screenplay on spec, and their luck improved. They had met in New York in 2008, when the director was editing his football-hooligan drama *Cass* there and the producer was attending the Tribeca Film Festival with *The Cottage*. The same year, Marshall attended the Inside Pictures course presented by the National Film and Television School with Qwerty Films (the company owned by former PolyGram boss Michael Kuhn); Baird snagged a place on the well-regarded industry bootcamp in 2010. The course includes a week in Los Angeles, where Baird was able to win a five-minute pitch

meeting with CAA agent Chris Andrews. The latter promised to read the script, and did.

"Chris really lit the flame under the project," Marshall says. "He got all the other agents at CAA to read it. The next thing we knew, there was all sorts of cast being suggested to us, big names thrown our way, and really that lit the fuse. Jon ended up going back out to LA with Irvine Welsh in tow. They spent a week out there, met different cast, hanging out at the pool... Soho House and all this shit – it was like *Entourage*."

In the end, a crucial piece of casting was found closer to home, after James McAvoy's UK agent Ruth Young read the script and saw protagonist Bruce Robertson as a potential strong role for her client. "Initially," Marshall says, "we were like, James is a bit young, is he right? Is he dangerous enough?" But after meeting him, Marshall, Baird and executive producer Welsh's concerns evaporated. "By the end of the meeting, we were, 'this is Bruce'. You could see he had transformed, there was a real steeliness there. James is such a smart guy. We were excited: we got our Bruce. The whole film revolves around this character."

However the casting of McAvoy also brought challenges. He was coming off *X-Men: First Class* and had a number of major offers. What's more,



he was soon committed to *Welcome to the Punch* from *Shifty* director Eran Creevy – was *Filth* an indie Brit flick too many for the in-demand star? Since the birth of their son in 2010, he also doesn't usually take roles if partner Anne-Marie Duff is working. Eventually, a narrow window of availability emerged, starting in January 2012.

With Jamie Bell now also on board, the only thing missing was finance. The British Film Institute, BBC Films and Film4 – the three main funding bodies that any aspiring UK indie producer hopes to entice – all turned it down. “They didn't believe in it,” says Marshall. “I think they found it challenging. I think the BFI was worried that this wasn't the right second film for Jon. I think they maybe thought it was too ambitious – not so much from a production scale point of view, but from a creative point of view.”

The project won some impressive pre-sales, notably Lionsgate in the UK, Icon in Australia and Metropolitan in France, but there was still a gap, which was ultimately plugged by Maven, the new company launched by producers Trudie Styler and Celine Rattray. Along the way, the film had picked up investment from sources in Germany, Belgium and Sweden, but at a price: they needed to shoot and spend money in all these countries. With Creative Scotland also on board, Marshall was disappointed that salaries for Scotsmen Welsh, Baird and McAvoy wouldn't count as Scottish spend, since none are resident in the country.

With the shoot starting-date of 23 January 2012 looming and finance yet to be finalised, Marshall

*There were moments where you're standing on a platform edge on the tube and thinking, I can understand how people jump*

had no option but to start hiring crew for the industry-standard six weeks of pre-production. “To cashflow our prep, Jon and myself and friends and family were loaning us money. I can safely say that Jon and I had the worst Christmas period of our lives. There were moments where you're standing on a platform edge on a tube station and thinking, I can understand how people jump. It was so nerve-wracking. The crew in Scotland had been burnt before. We had a great crew, but they were understandably dubious. It was really touch and go. I remember December 23, Jon and I transferring our own money to pay crew.” Casting went down to the wire, with Eddie Marsan joining a month before the shoot began and Jim Broadbent the week before.

With so many financing partners, the legal process dragged on. “We didn't close the finance until four weeks into the shoot,” says Marshall. “It was a small miracle we managed to keep going. Cashflow was dire. The one thing that kept me going was seeing the rushes, and how great they were, how amazing they looked, what an amazing performance James was putting in, and what a fantastic cast we had. Because I wouldn't want to wish that experience on anybody.” ☺



**Filth is released on 4 October and is reviewed on page 73**

## THE NUMBERS DAVID BOWIE IS HAPPENING NOW

By Charles Gant

One of the unintended consequences of the conversion of cinemas from 35mm to digital is the rich mix of alternative content that now regularly plays in them, beamed by satellite from venues as diverse as the New York Metropolitan Opera, Glyndebourne and London's National Theatre. Such performance pieces naturally lend themselves to the cinema space, but more surprising has been the fast-growing audience appetite for seeing art and museum exhibitions on the big screen – events that by their very nature are presumed to be static.

It was less than two years ago that London's National Gallery presented *Leonardo Live*, an exclusive preview of its Da Vinci exhibition, distributed by Picturehouse. Says the latter's head of commercial development Marc Allenby, “Expectations were very modest. It was very much: ‘Will this even work as a concept, can an exhibition be brought to the cinema screen as a live event?’ The take-up from cinemas was quite sceptical.” Initially booked into a modest 60 cinemas nationwide, audience demand ensured a much wider encore release after the Da Vinci exhibition closed. Cinema showings of the British Museum's Pompeii and the Royal Academy's Manet and Munch exhibitions followed. Now we have just witnessed *David Bowie is happening now*, a special event created for the closing night of the Victoria and Albert Museum's sellout show.

Box office for alternative content events does not appear in the official reports compiled by data collector Rentrak, and distributors and rights holders can be cagey about disclosing results, so it's a reflection of the growing solidity of this sector that Picturehouse quickly published numbers for the David Bowie event. A robust 217 screens carried the live presentation, delivering £261,000, with repeats at press time taking the total gross to £294,000. Profitability

remains more of a conjecture since unlike a performance, the live event has to be specifically created – produced by Done & Dusty in this instance, with fans including Hanif Kureishi, Michael Clark and Jeremy Deller offering their perspectives on the night – and then there are the usual digital transmission costs. As for ticket pricing, the premiums associated with high-end performance content are not achievable. Explains Allenby, “Certainly with *David Bowie* and *Leonardo Live*, there was a real aspiration to keep the ticket prices in line with the actual exhibition, or lower, even when it's sold out.”

Despite the success of repeat screenings, Picturehouse believes the live aspect remains crucial. “It grounds the event,” says Allenby. “It gives it focus, purpose and a position as to: why now, why Tuesday 7pm? Also it energises people to buy tickets for it: there's the immediacy and the fact that it's not going to run and run.”

At press time, an international rollout for *David Bowie is happening now* was still being negotiated, due to rights clearances for content. Comments Allenby, “That's probably the biggest barrier to new strands of content. It's not that there's any unreasonable or difficult conversations to be had, as much as it's a process that needs to be undertaken months or even years before the live event in many cases.”

With *David Bowie*, Picturehouse identified the exhibition as a suitable live event as soon as it was announced last September, and started working on it with the V&A. But not all successes are so predictable. Says Allenby, “It's more difficult when you have got something that's suddenly successful and you think, we're under-exploiting it, and you have to get the rights in retrospect. It can mean some events that should be alternative content events in cinemas aren't being done because it's too complicated at the stage when it's identified. That's the fundamental shift that needs to happen to see more interesting and diverse content coming through.” ☺



The man who sold the world: the live event was created for the last night of the V&A's sellout show

## LIVE AND KICKING

## BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

Does the recent success of live alternative content events in cinemas suggest a way forward for independent releases?



By Ben Roberts

Remember when going to the cinema was a big deal? I remember my parents announcing they were taking us to see *E.T.* at the three-

screen Cannon in Coventry, one of just three cinemas in town at the time and the only screen playing the film that I had been waiting to see for what felt like YEARS since its release in America.

You couldn't book seats at the Cannon in 1982, so we queued through two showings before racing through the foyer and up the stairs into the massive screen one, finding four seats wherever we could amid the popping of Kia-Oralids.

I'll put some of this down to nostalgia, but there's no doubt that for all the decades-long investment in better cinema sound, picture and seating, the experience has dulled for me as online booking for hourly screenings in half-empty barns became the norm. Yes, I like to watch films with 400 other people, and I like to queue for the privilege. I like an event. And I hope the films that we at the BFI fund will become such events.

So I was fascinated – and agitated – when our distribution team presented figures on the recent rise in popularity of alternative content and live event screenings, which are represented and marketed by the Event Cinema Association.

Alternative content includes everything from sport and music concerts, to ballet, opera and theatre. Exhibitors like it because they can charge a high price (£15-£20) for tickets that often sell out in advance. It also brings new customers into screens operating well below capacity. The producers and audiences like it because it brings events out of London and takes them nationwide.

As theatrical admissions have levelled out, the growth of this market has been impressive. In 2012, more than 130 events screened at UK cinemas, collecting box office in excess of £12.5 million. Picturehouse Cinemas, also one of the biggest distributors of alternative content, has said that it accounts for 12% of their box office.

Kenneth Branagh's *Macbeth*, the British Museum's 'Pompeii – Live' and a live event from the V&A's 'David Bowie is' exhibition, have all screened recently in more than 200 cinemas. But the daddy of them all is the NT Live performance of *The Audience*, written by Peter Morgan and directed by Stephen Daldry, which grossed more than £1 million from just one showing on one day. Around 80,000 people watched sold-out shows across the UK, and a further 30,000 in the US.

*Is the consequence of wider releases a lower screen average and a more leisurely take-up of film?*



Walk the line: when cinema trips were a big deal

The appetite of exhibitors and audiences for alternative content could be intimidating for producers and distributors of specialised film. After all, these are cinema screens – they should be showing films! But it provides some insights into audience habits, and some food for thought regarding release patterns for independent film.

For many years the mantra of the BFI's Prints and Advertising Fund has been wider, day-one access for specialised film. In a busy market where films live or die on their opening weekend, distributors are hedging their bets with more screens, and we have encouraged them to do so. I'm sure that both *Frances Ha* and *Wadjda* have benefited from this approach in recent weeks. And yet... is the consequence of wider releases a lower screen average and a more leisurely take-up of film?

One exhibitor told me last week he resents distributors planning for high screen averages – not surprising since cinemas often have to pay a higher rental on busy screens – but I suspect wider releases are diluting the "must-see-now" proposition for smaller films.

Some years ago at Metrodome we settled on a risky restrictive release strategy for *Donnie Darko*. The theory was that the buzz during and after a talking-point film would be multiplied both by the number of people sharing it in a room and the number turned away, and, for that film at least, it worked.

The market has changed dramatically since then, but audiences are gravitating towards film events. Companies such as Secret Cinema began 'eventising' films a few years ago with considerable success, but these events are clandestine, often retrospectives, and mostly confined to London.

In first run, we have seen a rise in applications that have satellite premieres and Q&As at the core of their release. *Stone Roses: Made of Stone* took nearly half of its £500,000 gross from its premiere event, and Ben Wheatley's see-it-everywhere event release of *A Field in England* generated audiences for a film which would have otherwise struggled to reach beyond a hard core of fans.

Audience access to specialised film is one of the BFI's biggest priorities. But perhaps 'access' could be open to wider interpretation. For all the access that more screens and day-and-date video-on-demand releases provide, I wonder if the majority of specialised films released today can ever match the success of *The Audience*. @bfbiben

## IN PRODUCTION

● **Justin Kurzel**, the Australian director of *Snowtown*, has replaced Natalie Portman with Marion Cotillard as Lady Macbeth in his adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy. Kurzel follows in the footsteps of Orson Welles and Roman Polanski in adapting the play for the big screen. Cotillard stars alongside Michael Fassbender as the murderous king.

● **Mohsen Makhmalbaf**, who lives in exile in the UK having left Iran after the 2005 election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has just announced his first English-language feature. Entitled *The President*, it is based on an old screenplay by the director which focuses on a deposed dictator on the run in a fictional Caucasus state he once ruled.

● **Clint Eastwood** is in talks to replace Steven Spielberg at the helm of *American Sniper*, a biopic of Chris Kyle, the most lethal marksman in US military history. The screenplay is based on the Navy SEAL's autobiography, written a year before Kyle was killed on a shooting range by a fellow Iraq War veteran. Spielberg reportedly departed the project over budgetary disputes but Bradley Cooper, who was slated to play Kyle, is expected to stay in the role.

● **Richard Linklater's** upcoming feature *Boyhood*, which the director began shooting in 2002, is reportedly finally nearing completion. The film ambitiously chronicles a boy's life between the ages of six and 18 and continues the director's fascination with filming characters over extended periods of time. The feature is to be stitched together from shorts Linklater has filmed and stars Ethan Hawke and Patricia Arquette as the boy's parents.

● **Spike Lee** (below) abandoned traditional funding streams for his latest project and followed many a fledgling filmmaker by putting it on the crowd-funding site Kickstarter. Michael K. Williams (*The Wire*, *Broadwalk Empire*) and British actress Zarah Abrahams are set to star in his untitled thriller about "human beings who are addicted to blood". The film, which Lee describes as "a new kind of love story – and not a remake of *Blacula*", surpassed its goal and raised nearly \$1.5 million (including a \$10,000 donation from Steven Soderbergh), making it the third-largest feature ever funded on the site.





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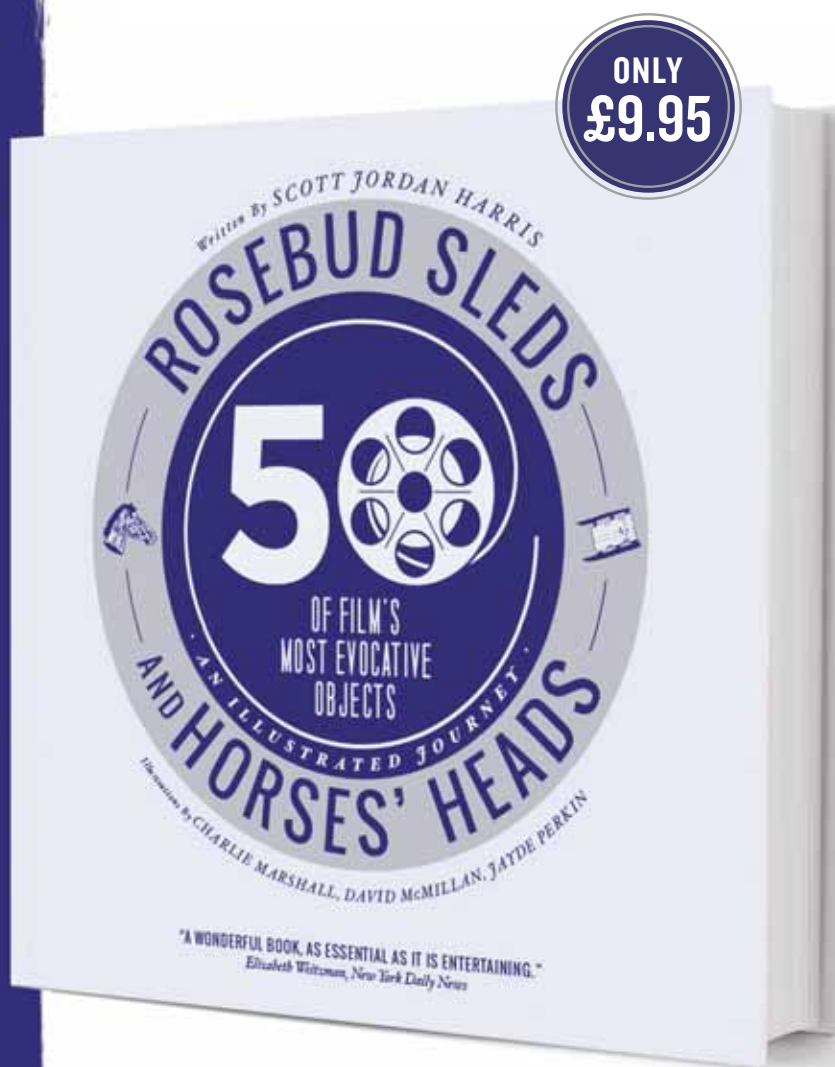
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# CHRISTINE LANGAN

The BBC Films head discusses class and gender bias in the media, and crowning her own career with an Oscar nomination for *The Queen*

By Geoffrey Macnab

A July morning on the seventh floor of the BBC building on Portland Place in central London. It is the day after the world premiere of *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*, the comedy starring Steve Coogan as the hapless Norfolk DJ. This is the first in a number of features backed by BBC Films being unveiled in late 2013. Stephen Frears's *Philomena*, also starring Coogan, this time alongside Judi Dench, is due for release in early November after a Venice Festival premiere. Ralph Fiennes' *The Invisible Woman*, about the love affair between the actress Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens, is premiering at the Toronto Festival. Disney's *Saving Mr. Banks* – developed by BBC Films and starring Tom Hanks as Walt Disney (the first-ever screen portrayal) and Emma Thompson as P.L. Travers, author of *Mary Poppins* – should be in cinemas just after Christmas.

From Partridge to Disney, from Norwich to Hollywood, BBC Films covers all the bases. Its head, Christine Langan, has a relatively modest budget at her disposal – £11 million a year to cover everything from investment in development and production to administration and salaries. Nevertheless, BBC Films – along with the BFI and Film4 – is, as Langan points out, one of the bedrocks of the UK film industry.

A small army of BBC workers from several departments is crammed into the seventh floor offices and everyone is obliged to hot desk. Still, Langan is delighted to be in Portland Place, a stone's throw from Soho, rather than in BBC Films' old base far away in White City, West London. Now, she is close to the filmmakers the BBC works with, only a short walk from their editing suites and post-production offices. Langan also says she is heartened by the enthusiasm that the Beeb's new director-general Tony Hall is showing for film.

Langan, 48, is from a working-class North London background. As a kid she used to watch old Charlton Heston and Clark Gable movies with her mother, but had no sense until later that she would herself end up working in the film business. A teacher encouraged her to apply for Oxbridge and she ended up studying English literature at Cambridge University in the mid-1980s.

After that, she started looking for work in film, finding that a Cambridge degree was not much immediate help. She talks a little forlornly of walking round Soho, knocking on doors of what she thought were film companies and asking for jobs. She worked as a receptionist from 8am till 2pm and spent her afternoons looking for film work. She did film reviews for a Radio 2 cinema programme and was an intern for Stuart Urban (*An Ungentlemanly Act*, *Our Friends in the North*), helping produce corporate films.

An important early job was working as an assistant to Tessa Ross, now head of Film4 but then running the National Film Development



In the driving seat: Christine Langan

Fund (which was part of British Screen). Here, Langan began to refine her script-editing skills. "I had a full-time job as Tessa's assistant but I was able to read a lot of scripts and write coverage [summary and analysis]," she says.

Every six weeks, the panel that decided NDFE funding – including Shawn Slovo, Jack Rosenthal and George Faber – would meet. "I'd nip out to Marks & Spencer and get the biscuits. I'd get the photocopying done. But I would also sit there when the teams came in to pitch. It was incredibly informative," Langan recalls that she "drank in" knowledge from these pitching sessions.

Eventually, an opportunity came up to work as a script editor for Granada in Manchester. Langan took it and found herself "on the corridor where they make *Coronation Street*".

Langan worked on the daytime soap opera *Families*, created by Kay Mellor. Another early assignment was on *Rik Mayall Presents*, a TV comedy drama series shot

*It's tough to come into this arena from a working-class background. I was really overwhelmed how middle-class the media was*

on film and produced by Andy Harries.

Soon, Langan moved back to London to take a job at Paramount, but when her boss resigned shortly afterward, the department folded and she was left "high and dry". She therefore went back to work with Harries at Granada: "I am eternally grateful to him. He is brilliant with young people. He throws them in at the deep end."

During her time with Harries, she not only further honed her script development skills, but learned about editing and producing as well. She worked with the writer Mike Bullen, first on a one-off romantic comedy, *The Perfect Match*, about a football fan who proposes to his girlfriend live on the big screen during the FA Cup Final, and then on the comedy drama *Cold Feet* (1998-2003), described by critics as the British answer to America's *Thirtysomething*. After a rocky start and unfavourable scheduling, it became a big popular success over a five-year run. Langan describes the series as her "first real experience in the driving seat".

She went freelance, producing romantic comedy series *Rescue Me* (2002), scripted by David Nicholls (*One Day*), at Tiger Aspect for BBC One. She directed the final episode herself. The series wasn't a success. She returned to work with Harries again, this time hooking up with writer Peter Morgan and director Stephen Frears to make the political drama *The Deal* (2003), starring Michael Sheen as Tony Blair and David Morrissey as Gordon Brown, broadcast to considerable acclaim on Channel 4. The same team went on to make *The Queen* (2006), for which Langan, Harries and Tracey Seaward shared a Best Picture Oscar nomination.

She joined BBC Films in 2006. Since then, she has overseen such films as *The Damned United*, *Fish Tank* (both 2009) and *My Week With Marilyn* (2011). She is one of the most influential executives in the UK film industry – and one of the best connected.

Ask the BBC Films boss about recent research from the BFI Stats Yearbook which suggests that women film writers and directors are under-represented in the UK industry and she gives a measured response: "It's tough for everyone. It's tough for young men and for young women. Like anything else, you need role models. When you see a woman directing, it becomes more achievable for a woman to direct."

At the BBC, Langan says, she is "surrounded by women in great jobs". But class remains an issue: "I think it is tough to come into this arena from a working-class background... I was really overwhelmed when I really got into the media at how middle-class it was. It didn't obviously feel like that in Manchester, working with people like [writers] Paul Abbott and Kay Mellor. For some reason – I guess it is to do with, frankly, soap – [there was] the enjoyment and drama through ordinary voices and the lives of ordinary people."

Langan believes there is "in the pure creative world of writers and so on, a really mixed array of people", but that "the infrastructure seems to be made up of certainly very well educated people, often quite privileged people... I think any kind of scholarships and paid placements that can be set up should be. We really need to capture society as it is." 📌



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LOCARNO

## THE LEOPARD SPRINGS SURPRISES

Now nearly 70, the Swiss festival has not lost its cutting edge – it remains invigoratingly hard to summarise or predict

By Carmen Gray

Locarno's 66th edition kicked off with thunderstorms, filling the Swiss resort town's cobbled streets with umbrellas in the festival's trademark leopard-print. Under the mountains near Lake Maggiore, the ten-day August event has never lacked dramatic atmosphere. This year a complete George Cukor retrospective brought guests Faye Dunaway and Jacqueline Bisset, but as usual the focus was on new discoveries rather than red-carpet dazzle. The 20 films in the stylistically diverse main competition included the odd misfire (the catalogue of melodrama clichés that was *Une autre vie* and the jarringly over-stylised *The Strange Colour of Your Body's Tears*) and two daringly innovative, soul-stirring stand-outs.

Lav Diaz's jury got it right, awarding the Golden Leopard to Albert Serra's grandiosely eccentric *Story of My Death*. Having previously reworked Don Quixote in *Honour of the Knights*, the uncompromising Catalan avant-gardist has radically merged the myths of Casanova and Dracula. In a sumptuous 18th-century setting, the idle libertine (a thickly made-up Vicenç Altaïó, his face gripping in its casual perversity) travels to the Carpathians with his valet. Horror seeps into the masterfully measured atmosphere, as rationalism is colonised by dark romanticism. In a mood of unsettlingly oblique inertia, evidence of bodily disharmony – inexplicable laughter, a strained bowel movement, blood rivulets – proliferates, gathering to a finale of alarmingly memorable force.

Joaquim Pinto's *What Now? Remind Me* won the Special Jury Prize. The film chronicles a year in the life of the Portuguese director (Raúl Ruiz's former sound mixer) as he trials anti-HIV drugs. Profoundly human, nakedly honest and ambitiously wide-reaching, it stretches back into memory, and experiments with form to weave in philosophical thought from figures such as the poet Ruy Belo, putting Pinto's illness into the context of the history of viruses and humankind's domination of animals for agriculture. Footage of Pinto and his partner outdoors with their beloved pet dogs creates a portrait of the natural symbiosis of species that's full of reflective melancholy, but never sentimental.

Notable out of competition was *A Spell to Ward Off the Darkness*, a collaboration between experimental filmmakers Ben Rivers and Ben Russell. The three-part blend of mystical symbols, commune living and Norwegian metal, shot in the European far north, doesn't quite hang together but its playful explorations felt fresh. Top prize in the Filmmakers of the Present section went to *Manakamana*, the debut documentary by Pacho Velez and Stephanie



Going the whole Hogg: Viv Albertine and Liam Gillick in Joanna Hogg's 'unsettling' *Exhibition*

Spray of Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab, has a static camera recording cable-car passengers as they travel above the Nepalese jungle to a temple: it's a simple conceit that's mesmerising even if uncomfortably voyeuristic.

Back in the main competition, the casual-seeming but meticulously crafted *Our Sunhi* was charmingly irreverent but slight – business as usual for Korean auteur Hong Sangsoo as the film riffs on the constructs we use to define others, through boozy conversations between film graduate Sunhi and her romantic interests. Romanian New Wave stalwart Corneliu Porumboiu's *When Evening Falls on Bucharest or Metabolism* disappointed – its laboured, navel-

*Evidence of bodily disharmony – inexplicable laughter, a strained bowel movement, blood rivulets – proliferates*



Gripping: Vicenç Altaïó in *Story of My Death*

gazing string of dialogues, around a director sleeping with his actress, lacking the black wit and brilliant finale of his *Police, Adjective*.

It was thrilling to see British director Joanna Hogg surpass herself with the unsettling, idiosyncratic and darkly witty *Exhibition*. Dedicated to the modernist architect James Melvin and set in a home he designed, it's a privileged-class domestic drama, like her previous film *Archipelago*, but more obviously experimental. Strained artworld couple D and H (convincingly embodied by former punk-rocker Viv Albertine and conceptual artist Liam Gillick) are selling their house. D is reluctant, believing it is filled with spiritual residue. The stark building is filmed as a haunting presence, bringing to mind Kleber Mendonça Filho's recent *Neighbouring Sounds*, which likewise linked spatial architecture with urban psychological horror.

In comparison, Thomas Imbach's biopic *Mary, Queen of Scots* was lifelessly conventional, even while seeking to reinvent the ill-fated monarch as a feminist trailblazer. More challenging was the young rebel, rejecting female bodily decorum, in *Wetlands*, David Wnendt's highly anticipated adaptation of Charlotte Roche's controversial, largely autobiographical German bestseller. The unrelenting gross-out aesthetic, from haemorrhoids to used tampons, pushed audience taste-limits with adolescent glee while staying bubblegum-innocuous. Conversely, Destin Cretton's *Short Term 12* promised little on paper, with its generic plot about a foster-care facility for at-risk teens, but with performances so powerful they totally immersed, it injected fresh vigour into the US indie. Locarno's made of such surprises. **S**

# LONG ARM OF THE LORE

*Mauled by the studio, obsessed over by fans, deconstructed by academics, remade with Nicolas Cage – yet the pagan British weirdness of ‘The Wicker Man’ remains fresh. As ‘The Final Cut’ is released, director Robin Hardy recalls the making of a myth*

**By Vic Pratt**

**Come, it is time** to keep your appointment with Robin Hardy’s *The Wicker Man*. Forty years old, the film burns brighter than ever across the scarred terrain of British Cinema. Famously championed by *Cinefantastique* stateside, as far back as 1977, as “the *Citizen Kane* of horror”, it took longer to ignite at home, but nowadays regularly ranks high in best film polls, with its star, Christopher Lee, having declared that in it he gave his greatest performance.

Certainly his Lord Summerisle – forever statuesque in natty sports jacket and yellow polo neck atop that Scottish island cliff, arms raised, fingers strangely crooked, hair flying in the wind, in front of the flaming you-know-what – has become familiar enough that he might conceivably challenge The Count as the part for which Lee is best remembered. Which doubtless pleases him no end.

Despite all this, back in the dark days of the British film industry of the early 1970s, *The Wicker Man*, unloved and unwanted, was condemned by the very company that released it as “hellishly difficult to market.” Great chunks were chopped to make it a supporting feature, ignominiously shoved out on the bottom end of a double bill with *Don’t Look Now*.

It wouldn’t have been surprising if – like many other difficult-to-label British features that litter that awkward decade – it had quietly faded into







**LORD HIGH EXECUTIONER**  
Christopher Lee regards  
Lord Summerisle, the  
nattily dressed pagan  
feudal overlord, as his  
greatest film role

obscurity; but it didn't. A legend grew around *The Wicker Man*, one perhaps more complex than the ingenious narrative at its heart. Its cause was taken up by a passionate band of fiercely dedicated aficionados, initially in the USA, then back in Blighty, all proudly wielding its undeserved neglect like a banner. Cut into more versions than anyone can keep track of, the film has a production history that's shrouded in mystery and confusion. Those in the know still argue over the running times and respective merits of the 'short', 'medium' and 'long' *Wicker Man*. It became the textbook 'cult' movie, with word of its charms spread from fan to fan, in an analogue age, via whispered rumour and fanzines, back when your only chance of catching a forgotten film was if it turned up on telly late one night. And it was a 1988 BBC screening, with which Alex Cox launched his cult cinema series *Moviedrome*, that finally brought *The Wicker Man* home. They were supposed to be showing the 'long' version for the very first time; but instead they showed the 'medium'. It was all very mysterious. The flames of fascination were fanned once more.

Now, four decades since release, reappraised, scrutinised, analysed, deconstructed and obsessed over, it is the subject of painstakingly researched books and worthy academic treatises, and it features on the media studies 'A' level syllabus. You can buy the soundtrack – an essential purchase – or the Hollywood remake featuring Nicolas Cage in a bear suit, which is possibly not so essential. With the remastered 'medium' version about to see British release for the first time, *The Wicker Man* teeters on the borders of the mainstream; perhaps elevation to the canon of cinematic greatness waits just around the corner. But in some ways that might spoil the fun.

### KILLING JOKE

Robin Hardy, in his eighties and still going strong, recently completed *The Wicker Tree*, a long-delayed sequel to the 1973 original, and is beginning the concluding part of the trilogy. "The third film is where the gods get their comeuppance. I set the whole thing in the parentheses of the last act of Wagner's Ring cycle. And it's in a Scottish setting... just to make it more complicated." Hardy doesn't believe in making things easy for himself. "I think of a number of things we can have fun with, and can't resist putting them all in." Driven, determined, full of ideas, juggling various projects, grabbing funding where he can, he's also developing a theme park based on Scottish history. "It's a new idea of mine and uses all these incredible technologies that are now available to us in movies... to give the illusion that you were there when something extraordinary happened."

Despite the extraordinary things that happened to *The Wicker Man* all those years ago, and though his original director's fee remains all he ever took home for his efforts, he is more than happy to see the enigmatic colossus that was his feature debut shuffle slowly into the sunlight of mainstream acknowledgement. "I'm pleased about that," he smiles. "Not just for myself, but for everyone else who was involved in it."

The film grew out of Hardy's friendship with Anthony Shaffer (author of *Sleuth*, screenwriter of *Frenzy*). Having worked together as advertising agency Hardy-Shaffer (Shaffer produced; Hardy directed), and sharing a dry,

understated sense of humour, they combined forces to come up with the idea. "Tony was a great game player. And if you think about *Sleuth* it's all about games. Two people playing games with each other. Over the course of our partnership – all those years – we played elaborate games with each other. Some were really very funny, some were appalling." One 'game' saw Hardy, having foolhardily asked Shaffer to suggest a nice quiet spot for a weekend break, duped into booking a hotel in Sicily that just happened to be hosting a German Panzer unit reunion. Arriving, he was greeted by the sound of 900 soldiers hoisting their steins. "Tony had to do some very quick research for that one."

"But think about *The Wicker Man*. It's one huge game. We had been aficionados of the Hammer films. They used all the old clichés of the witchcraft thing, holding up crosses, garlic – things the Catholic church invented as propaganda against the still-surviving old religion that they had replaced. We thought it would be quite good to create a society where the actual Celtic religion informed everybody. We went for all the religious and quasi-religious things which informed the mythology of various nations going back, back, back. I had a house on a little island on the Thames... Tony came and spent a long weekend in '71 or '72 and we worked out the story there."

It's quite a story. *The Wicker Man* sees staunchly Christian police sergeant Howie (Edward Woodward) fly to Summerisle, a remote Scottish island, to investigate the disappearance of young Rowan Morrison. Suspicions aroused by locals' claims that there is no such girl, Howie is led a merry dance by a bizarre assortment of apparently friendly island folk as he attempts to locate her. He is disgusted by the islanders' overt sexuality – the youngsters enjoy mass alfresco lovemaking on the village green – and horrified by their pagan practices. He finds himself tested by the pub landlord's daughter, Willow (Britt Ekland), who, pausing from her sacred duty of ushering young men of the island into manhood, sings a sexy song through the inn wall which has the chaste policeman next door writhing in his pyjamas. Howie encounters Lord Summerisle (Christopher Lee), the islanders' charming, pantheistic leader, who has concocted the kidnap as a deception to lure the virginal Howie to his doom. A sacrifice to the sun god, Howie is to be burnt in the eponymous structure, in the hope that the islanders' crops – recently blighted – will grow again. He – and the audience – only discover this in a masterful reveal in the closing minutes. The film is as elaborately constructed as a Hardy-Shaffer practical joke; but grander, darker, and genuinely horrifying. "Every five minutes there was a strong clue," explains Hardy. "Howie picks up some but he doesn't pick up others, and the audience has the chance to pick up some and see what's going on."

As Howie attempts to assert authority over this remote territory, humourless straight man to the islanders' absurd antics, the film is somehow silly and serious at the same time, splendidly possessed of a very British eccentric sensibility. "It's where Tony and I met," says Hardy. "We enjoyed that sort of humour, that sort of bathos." The film never leaves Howie to reveal the behind-the-scenes deception; we see the whole thing from his point of view. Never were so many bizarre blasphemies and pagan weirdnesses displayed for one so singularly unable to appreciate them.



Never were so many bizarre blasphemies and pagan weirdnesses displayed for one so singularly unable to appreciate them





The film was evocatively shot (by Harry Waxman) on location in Scotland – one contemporary reviewer meant it as criticism when he described the “folk custom travelogue” look, but this is precisely why it rings so true. The folk customs, tightly storyboarded by ex-art director Hardy and derived from his study of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, seem very authentic. Some critics have complained that they’re not *that* authentic – the sword-dancing comes in for particular tut-tutting – but if this is not how the customs were carried out, it is surely how they should have been. Everything is there, from corn dollies and choreographed maypole dances to the more ludicrous extremes of toads thrust into little girls’ mouths as a cure for sore throats and the gleeful hanging of ‘navel strings’ above the graves of the recently deceased.

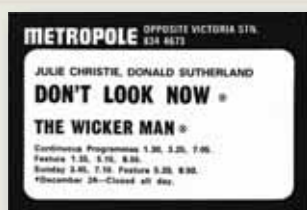
Perhaps it all seems so real because the ‘old ways’ sit like vivid fissures in the surface of modernity. In the sweet shop, sugar hares sit beneath Emu erasers, next to Sherbet Fountains; in the inn, a psychedelic pin-up poster adorns the ancient ceiling beneath Willow’s bedroom. Summerisle’s trendy sneakers peep out beneath the traditional ‘man-woman’ costume he adopts for the parade. The present is piled on top of the past, evoking a distinctly plausible world of folk tradition. We can enjoy it all, vividly alive before our very eyes, a cornucopia of superstitions made real, without having to read any of those dry old books on folklore ourselves.

With the local youngsters beautiful, hairy, hollow cheeked and horny, unashamedly copulating outdoors in slow motion, and even their elders making the most

of a particularly permissive society, here, for perhaps the first time in cinema history, we got to see how cool and sexy folk culture could be. The music had a lot to do with it. No library music here, or dreary cod-folk orchestral stuff; this film was brimful with terrific folksongs, which – in defiance of the real-ale rep of much hey-nonny-no warbling – were achingly hip and dripped with smouldering sexuality. “I thought it would be fun and entertaining and probably truthful if we used folksongs,” says Hardy. “Nearly all of Robert Burns’ great poems have been put to music, so we used those, and then there were ones that were cooked up and sounded more Victorian, like ‘The Landlord’s Daughter’.” Behind the soundtrack was the Italian-American playwright and musician Paul Giovanni, who somehow tapped straight into the British folk tradition, to trance-like, hypnotic effect. Seemingly situated somewhere outside the period in which it was recorded, or any period, Giovanni’s astonishing music, fused with Hardy’s beautifully composed imagery, is a major factor in *The Wicker Man*’s enduring appeal. “Songs like the maypole song tell you what’s going on without the need for a great deal of back and forth dialogue,” says Hardy. “It’s not new – opera has done it for years. But it was new in the sense of the kind of music we used.”

But unmusical discord awaited *The Wicker Man*. Producer Peter Snell, briefly in charge of British Lion, who had consorted with Hardy, Shaffer and Lee to bring *The Wicker Man* to the screen, duly delivered the film to his company. With *Don’t Look Now* also on the release slate, it looked like 1973’s film harvest would be

**SOMETHING FISHY**  
Sgt Howie (Edward Woodward) trawls for clues, above left, and coshes innkeeper MacGregor (Lindsay Kemp), bottom right. Top right, local people in their animal masks



**UNHOLY TRINITY**  
 Producer Peter Snell,  
 Anthony Shaffer and  
 Robin Hardy on set.  
 Left, a 1973 programme,  
 showing the original pairing  
 of Hardy's film with Roeg's  
*Don't Look Now*

**HOWIE'S PROGRESS**  
 Above, three sketches (which  
 have never been published  
 before) delineating key  
 scenes in the film. Robin  
 Hardy drew them on set  
 to convey his ideas to his  
 actors and crew

*The folk customs,  
 tightly story-  
 boarded by ex-art  
 director Hardy  
 and derived from  
 his study of James  
 George Frazer's  
 'The Golden  
 Bough', seem  
 very authentic*





← bountiful. However, British Lion was soon to become but a small cog in the enormous, frighteningly named EMI Entertainment and Leisure Division. Michael Deeley and Barry Spikings, incoming bosses, were eager to sort out the deal; Snell stood in the way. “*The Wicker Man* was something with which they could beat Peter Snell,” recalls Hardy. “They were pretty big shareholders in British Lion. They stood to make a lot more money if they could sell the company to EMI and therefore maximise their shareholding. But the two films that had been made that year were *The Wicker Man* and *Don’t Look Now*. So how do you fire the president of the company who didn’t want to see the sale go?” Spikings decided, “*The Wicker Man* was a very well-made, quirky movie that was going to be hellishly difficult to market.” Deeley, Lee claimed, was more damning, deflating the star at a preview screening with the blunt declaration: “It is one of the ten worst films I’ve ever seen.”

“They said: ‘We think it’s unsaleable!’ and put it out as second feature to *Don’t Look Now*,” says Hardy. “They did this to punish Peter.” The film was cut, without Hardy’s input. In retrospect, the director can live without the excised pre-credits footage, which saw Howie conversing with fellow coppers on the mainland – “I would cut that quite severely... it’s a bit *Z Cars*” – but remains outraged at the meddling with the island scenes, which saw the misguided removal of both the beautiful song ‘Gently Johnny’ and Lee’s wonderful entrance as Lord Summerisle, sporting a kilt, misquoting Walt Whitman poetry. “It’s an extraordinarily important sequence... it’s one of the loveliest songs in the entire film – and if you cut it you don’t meet Christopher for another quarter of an hour.”

Dismayed, Hardy returned to America, where he’d won awards art directing prestigious advertising campaigns. “There was nothing much I could do about it. I was only the director after all. I went back to the States. I was a bit pissed off with Britain at that point.”

In recent interviews, Deeley denied ever making rude remarks to Lee. What he actually said was “it was one of the ten most *unsaleable* films I’d ever seen.” And he did produce *Blade Runner*: ought not we to listen to him? *The Wicker Man* wasn’t your average horror flick. It did feature genre stalwarts Lee and Ingrid Pitt, and had a bit where a dismembered hand improbably burnt like a candlestick, but mostly it featured a policeman strolling about an island. Suppose Hardy and company, revelling in the strange, beautiful originality of their work, had ignored the fact that stuff like *On the Buses* was raking it in at the box office. Had they forgotten *The Wicker Man* had to be flogged to the punters?

It seems unlikely. Hardy and Shaffer knew all about commercial factors, as their years in advertising attest; besides, Shaffer was a bankable writer at the top of his game. *The Wicker Man* does straddle genres awkwardly, but was not without precedent in British Gothic cinema. *The Plague of the Zombies* had an ungodly squire manipulating assorted Cornish zombies for his own ends; *Night of the Demon* made it plausible that a charming fellow might be children’s entertainer one minute, leader of a Satanic sect the next; and *Night of the Eagle* inaugurated a film era where witchcraft could be carried out casually by whole communities in kitchen or classroom. Besides which, *Don’t Look Now*, British Lion’s favoured 1973 release, was itself a cerebral fusing of genres, lacking in



obvious horrors until the final grisly red-coated reveal, but no less brilliant for that. A terrific double bill they must have made, but un-butchered, properly promoted, *The Wicker Man* could surely have coined it in on its own account. For it must be the most splendid example of British ‘folk horror’, in which a remote regional community, and ancient customs and archaic superstitions, dismissed or marginalised by clever-clogs city folk, wreak havoc upon forces of modernity, order and authority.

**LANDLORD’S DAUGHTER**  
Britt Ekland as Willow, sent to tempt Howie to give up his puritan ways

## WEIRD TIMES

In fact, the time was exactly right for it. Strange things were going on in British pop culture in the early 1970s. As far back as 1967, those beloved British mop-tops The Beatles – once they’d joined the shaggy set – had sneaked arch-occultist Aleister Crowley on to the cover of *Sgt. Pepper*, and the Stones had even naughtily mentioned the Horned God in the album title *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. Disappointingly, perhaps, Jagger was no longer hanging around with Kenneth Anger or writing dangerous songs which saw him introducing himself as Lucifer; the new decade saw him instead submerged in bubbles in a sailor suit, anticlimactically declaring “It’s only rock ‘n’ roll”. But the burgeoning folk-rock scene of the 1970s still seemed authentic: the perfect vehicle for the esoteric and the arcane. Meanwhile, the children of the 1960s – disappointed that the revolution had not happened, perhaps, but their liberal minds expanded – had grown up to take their places in respectable society; an increasingly permissive society, if we were to believe the press. This was surely a film for them. They had become teachers. They had infiltrated the media. On television, the guys presenting *Play School* sported hefty facial hair and wore cheesecloth shirts; the gals were resplendent in multi-coloured maxi-skirts, and they’d brought their own guitars. One of the most memorable songs had one presenter sing “I like peace, I like quiet”, the other presenter’s loud riposte being “I like noise, I like riot”. Were they singing innocent songs to the nation’s youth, or was there a sub-text of subversion? And if that doesn’t convince you, one *Play School* presenter was Toni Arthur who, as revealed in Rob Young’s *Electric Eden*, studied under the self-styled king of the witches, Alex Sanders.



The political fervour of the counter-culture might have been damped down, but the yearning to replace the old order with something more authentic and spiritually fulfilling still smouldered beneath the surface. It wasn't gone; just insidiously embedding itself within the British cultural spectrum. Many longed for a return to spiritual values, though not those of the previous generation.

Folk custom, witchcraft and the occult were no longer absurdities; they might almost be an option. Certainly the old-fashioned movie monsters were passé and could no longer be taken seriously. The monsters of modernity were the breadheads: politicians, big business, corporations, all ravaging the nation. *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* saw Dracula (transformed into property developer D.D. Denham) behind a desk in an office block, figurehead of a sinister conglomerate.

Teens dipped their toes in the occult, albeit with their Waddington Ouija boards and subscriptions to *Man, Myth and Magic* – 'The most unusual magazine ever published' – which built up week by week into an illustrated encyclopedia of the supernatural. Like *The Wicker Man* it was not as lurid as it seemed: though it enticed readers with pictures of naked ladies and demons, the articles inside were penned by professors. Kids read the *Pocket Chiller Library*, monthly tales of witchcraft in comic strip form; on Saturday evening TV, they even saw contestants racing to make corn dollies on *The Generation Game*. When they were old enough to get into an X film they might have seen *Secret Rites*, a 1971 documentary about modern witchcraft in England. It followed high-street hairdresser Penny's initiation into Alex Sanders's groovy young coven, wherein numerous lurid sex games were indulged in, before two young lovers sealed their troth, approvingly overseen by Sanders wearing the head of Anubis. After a spoof first scene, showing witchcraft as sensationally depicted in horror films, it revealed the accessible face of wicca, demonstrating how happening groovers could join up with likeminded libidinous young witches, all eager to throw off their clothes and dance around the fire. Everybody was doing it.

Not everybody. None of this went unnoticed by the forces of conservatism. The year 1972 saw Mary Whitehouse, Howie-like opponent of sex and violence in the media, but especially sex, launch the Nationwide Petition for Public Decency. When it was presented to Ed-

ward Heath in early 1973, it bore more than 1 million signatures. Whitehouse and the Nationwide Festival of Light, the Christian movement she figureheaded, were at their zenith in 1973 – while *The Wicker Man* awaited release. It's tempting to remember Whitehouse as a blue-rinsed figure of fun, but media bosses took her very seriously. For example, *Casanova '73*, a BBC TV permissive society comedy series by *Steptoe and Son*'s Galton and Simpson, featuring Leslie Phillips as "a 20th century libertine", was pretty mild stuff, all things considered – not much racier than your average *Carry On* film. But it dared to be offhand about extra-marital relations. Under the pressure of Whitehouse's attack, it vanished from the schedules. We got *Man About the House* on ITV instead. Yes, it featured an unmarried man flat-sharing with attractive young ladies; but cookery student Robin Tripp was never seen engaging in anything more saucy than coq au vin followed by a quick snog on the sofa.

Whitehouse's main area of influence was television, but cinema too was under increased scrutiny. Films like *Witchfinder General* and *The Devils* provoked fierce debate about what was and what wasn't acceptable on screen; but these hid their subversion within period settings. Like *Casanova '73*, but worse, *The Wicker Man* was worryingly contemporary. Imagine the potential hoo-ha over a film about an island full of unmarried pagans who brazenly get it on outdoors, with the women on top, no less, before cheerfully torching a Christian policeman, while they have a rousing sing-song. And nobody turns up to rescue him. *Don't Look Now*, for all its modern horrors, centred on a nice, middle-class family. And most importantly, EMI Entertainment and Leisure may have noted, mummy and daddy were married.

The *Evening News*'s Felix Barker fuelled the fire with his piece headlined "They tried to keep THIS sex film quiet". British Lion, he wrote, never showed *The Wicker Man* to the press, "but from readers' letters, and word of mouth, it is clear that this film has captured audience imagination. With its beautifully filmed story of primitive sex rituals, carried out today on an island off the West Coast of Scotland, I can quite understand why. Try to catch it." Few could, of course.

Across the Atlantic, Hardy and Lee embarked on a press tour to promote a film they resolutely believed in. Intriguingly, those 'primitive sex rituals' went down well in the Bible Belt, says Hardy. "We went to Bible breakfasts,

*The film went down well in the Bible Belt... 'They said it was one of the only films they'd seen that really explains what resurrection is about'*

#### BANG TO RITES

The film's 'primitive sex rituals', below left, excited Felix Barker in the 'Evening News', but turned out to be far less fun for Sgt Howie (Edward Woodward), below right, 'freeing' Rowan Morrison (Geraldine Cowper)





showed the film, and there was much discussion. Fun-  
nily enough, they weren't put off by the Britt dance or  
anything. But the religious side of it, the Christians just  
loved. They said it was one of the only films they'd ever  
seen that really explains what resurrection is about."

Perhaps they'd twigged an important point: *The Wicker Man* was not a simplistic film which depicted counter-culture free spirits as heroes and uptight authorities as fools. Lord Summerisle – trendily polo-necked, down with the kids, but still, ultimately, landowning gentry – is out for his own ends, his propagation of pagan belief a handy tool for the control of his island serfs. Pagans might have more fun; but will sacrificing Howie cause the crops to succeed or fail? It remains bleakly uncertain. All we've learned, perhaps, is that nature cannot be controlled, people can – with religion a powerful means to that end. Don't trust anybody, or believe in anything, in fact; it's all a huge, dark existential joke. Hardy, an agnostic, describes himself as "a student of comparative religion" and has no particular sympathy for either side: "Really, you pay your money... and you take your choice."

As the cult grew in the USA, Hardy, trying to rebuild the film, approached British Lion for access to the cut sequences. Eventually he was told the footage had been destroyed. Some say it was thrown out by accident during a vault clear-out; others that it was deliberately discarded, and used as landfill in the building of the M3. Apparently Snell was teased with a visit to the roadworks, where amused studio staff pointed down a hole, proclaiming: "*The Wicker Man's* down there." Christopher Lee still insists that the original negative is out there somewhere. Luckily, early on, British Lion sent the long version to Roger Corman for comments. His print, recovered, was used for a new internegative, and Hardy recut the film – excising that *Z Cars* sequence, restoring 'Gently Johnny' – to create the 'medium' version for US distribution.

### THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

All this film-in-a-hole stuff might sound like a folktale concocted by film-folk with a persecution complex, until you hear that the medium-length American internegative and prints all mysteriously vanished. "What puzzles me," ponders Hardy, "is that that there must have been thirty or forty prints in distribution." Now, just as mysteriously, one of these prints has resurfaced and, digitally remastered, will see release as 'The Final Cut'.

Once you've seen the medium or long versions, you'll have little further use for the short one. But all are essential parts of the folktale. Lack of 35mm pre-print material means that the long version, as seen on recent DVDs, amalgamates materials from various sources, including a slightly fuzzy 1980s 1" video transfer of the Corman element. Hardy is not dissatisfied with 'grainy' qualities that sometimes appear mid-scene, as in the 'Gently Johnny' sequence; the main thing is his cut is intact. "I don't notice it... it's all set at night: night in Scotland. It could be a tiny bit foggy! It doesn't worry me a bit. What would really upset me would be if it goes."

The archivists among us surely long to see a fully restored version of the film derived from 35mm elements, and the new 'Final Cut' should almost provide that, bar a few mainland minutes. Yet folklorists must surely enjoy the flawed long version; that old variation in quality, the sudden grainy sequences, are textural scars that remind



us of a checkered past. The multigenerational flaws of decades-old transfer technologies are embedded in the images. Forever incomplete, with something added, something removed, like an old folk ditty with lyrics honed and melodies reshaped by time, *The Wicker Man* remains splendidly imperfect, the perfect folk film artefact.

Marvellous as it is to see the 'medium' version released, no version can be definitive. You get a glimpse, and wonderful it is, but never the whole story. If you register the imperfections in its surface – and many viewers don't, Hardy has noticed – they restate the complex drama that surrounded its production. It's hard to imagine anything visually like it happening in this 'born digital' age. When you switch on that hard drive, it either works, or it doesn't; you get all of it, or none of it. Whereas different textures of analogue remind us of *The Wicker Man's* patchwork history, the mystery, the indistinctness; it's even a little like the visual equivalent of Brian Wilson's unfinished Beach Boys album, *Smile*. Both are legendary; both were rebuilt, with newness layered upon the old, but neither can be experienced exactly as was originally intended. Incompleteness only adds to the fascination.

Forty years on, *The Wicker Man* still stands alone. Resistant to genre labels, of its time but ahead of its time, it also harks to a world outside time – a mysterious, tantalising world of indistinct folk memory, a distant Albion that lies within us all. Technological advances have not diminished our ache for something less artificial; and, as we plunge ever faster into an uncertain future, yet reach back and wonder at a shared folk history that remains just out of our grasp, *The Wicker Man's* ribald relevance is endlessly refreshed, and its earthy allure grows stronger.

"It stands apart from time and space," concludes Hardy. "I think it has endured because it's about part of this country's life, and mythology, and existence." While we remain sceptical of modernity and power, and ponder what we might believe in, but still enjoy a joke and a song, *The Wicker Man* will continue to tower enigmatically above us – whether we gather a good harvest or not.



**The new cut of *The Wicker Man* premieres at the BFI on 17 September, with a Q&A with Robin Hardy. It is released in UK cinemas on 27 September, and will be available on DVD and Blu-Ray on 14 October**

**CUSTOM ENGINEERING**  
Rituals such as the maypole dance were tightly storyboarded and choreographed

# MIND THE GAPS

In *'The Pervert's Guide to Ideology'*, Slavoj Žižek once again stares into the abyss between what filmmakers want to say and what they are actually saying – with assistance from his *'Leni Riefenstahl'*, Sophie Fiennes

By Sam Davies

It was probably 15 minutes into my interview with Slovenian philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek that I realised I wouldn't make it through the dozen or so questions I had prepared. In fact I was starting to wonder whether I'd make it on to my second. (His first answer, after transcription, weighed in at over a thousand words – half the length of this article).

We're sat in the quiet courtyard garden of a Bloomsbury hotel to discuss the new film he has made with director Sophie Fiennes, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*. Like their 2006 collaboration, *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, the film is an elegantly constructed essay: a tissue of cinematic quotations and recreations with commentary by Žižek. Sometimes he is simply himself, standing in a desert to discuss the metaphysical properties of everyday commodities like Coca-Cola or the Kinder Surprise. Sometimes, in brilliantly understated moments of recreation, his critique of a film is delivered as if he has materialized within its very frame: he discusses *Taxi Driver* flopped on Travis Bickle's grimy mattress in his army jacket, *Full Metal Jacket* plonked on a barracks toilet, and *The Sound of Music* dressed in the institutionally luxurious robes of a Catholic priest.

*The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* examined the libidinal urges at play in Hitchcock (*The Birds*, *Psycho*) or Coppola (*The Conversation*), showing how the irrational can shape a film's form and snare the viewer. But the personal is after all political; and in *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, Žižek and Fiennes in a sense scale their approach up, moving from the subjective, and the pathology of the individual, to the wider social field.

It's clear from the start that by 'ideology' Žižek does not mean one common understanding of the word: a set of explicit beliefs, such as a political programme, to which a group in society subscribes. *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* begins with a scene from John Carpenter's *They Live* (1988). Its hero John Nada is telling his friend to put on a pair of glasses which enable him to see the alien overlords living amongst us, and to read the subliminal suppressive media messages all around them. 'Put 'em on,' he snarls, 'or start eating that trashcan.' Enter Žižek in voiceover: 'I am already eating from the trashcan all the time,' he says. 'Name of the trashcan? Ideology.'

So my initial plan is to coax from Žižek a kind of Beginner's Guide to this new *Pervert's Guide*, with some concise definitions of key concepts: what is his notion of ideology? And what exactly is the 'Big Other' (a con-

cept Žižek has adapted from the psychoanalytic texts of Jacques Lacan)?

"By ideology, I mean something very radical," he says. "I mean almost the air we are breathing when we participate in social life. There is this dimension of ideology as an explicitly articulated worldview, which tells you where you are and what to do. But I think that much more decisive today is a notion of ideology as a set of presuppositions, implications and attitudes embodied in our material practices. I try to focus more and more on how beliefs can function even if no one believes in them." So those who vote with no faith in the democratic system; churchgoers who attend through force of habit, not faith. "This is what interests me, when at a deeper level, there can be an ideology which can even run counter to our explicit attitudes."

The ideological lies in the gap between what we say and what we do: and in film, in the gap between what the filmmaker wants to say and what the film, almost behind their back, is actually doing. "What interests me is precisely this tension in progressive Hollywood. In *Titanic* you know, it's almost ridiculous. All the rich people are mostly corrupted, the lower [down the decks and classes] you go, the more people are authentic, honest, all that." Yet, Žižek argues (and in the film he undergoes perhaps his funniest Mr Benn transformation yet to discuss *Titanic* in the guise of Leonardo DiCaprio) the film's de facto message is very different – and very conservative. "It's not even a love story! It's this idea that rich people need from time to time contact with poor, authentic people, to suck their blood to re-establish their life energy, and then they can drop them. In the film he is not so much [Kate Winslet's] lover, Leonardo DiCaprio, his function is to restore her ego and self-image, literally – you remember he draws her portrait, and when he does his job he can disappear!"

But Žižek argues that ideology isn't a simple veil that we can, with sufficiently thoughtful analysis, tear away, to gain enlightenment and access to a deeper reality. It wells up within us spontaneously: we dream it. We are complicit in it: we acquiesce to its flattery, we enjoy its obscene bribery, and we willingly accept the alibis it offers us. So in *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* Žižek takes 'Climb Ev'ry Mountain' from *The Sound of Music*, and presents it not as an inspirational *carpe diem*: instead it is a deeply cynical bargain, in which sexual licence is granted by an institution to the believer.







This is a characteristic move of Žižek's: reading against the grain, he essentially pops a film inside out, arguing that in the background, where its implicit assumptions lurk, a truth can be detected almost like a tell in a poker-player, which tends to outweigh whatever message the filmmaker hopes to present publicly and explicitly in the film's foreground – and this truth should weigh all the more heavily with the alert viewer *because it was hidden*. It's a move you find throughout his written work, from the text which first brought him serious attention in the anglophone cultural world, 1989's *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, to the dauntingly numerous books (and countless op-eds) he's written since. At times Žižek even ends up inverting his own previous readings. In our conversation he praises the last two series of *24* (a series he's denounced in print as torture porn) for the way in which Jack Bauer renounces his past use of violence. ('I haven't seen them,' I confess of the last two series. 'Neither have I – who has time?' Žižek replies, barely breaking stride.)

Acutely aware that most of the interview has disappeared with one question, I move on to my second: what exactly is the 'Big Other'? Žižek offers three interpretations. "One: all things that make an ideology livable." Examples of this in *...Ideology* come from

**SUBLIME OBJECT** Slavoj Žižek, the world's only celebrity Marxist-Lacanian philosophical joker, inserts himself into the mother superior's office in *The Sound of Music*, above, and *Full Metal Jacket*, left

films such as *Full Metal Jacket* and *MASH*: the obscene marching songs and scatological humour which provide a release valve for the pressures built up by institutional discipline. “The second level: appearances. In the sense that appearances have to be maintained, it doesn’t matter, it’s even better if you don’t mean them sincerely.” This is the repertoire of hypocritical behaviours which lubricate daily life – the insincere “How was your day?” of the café waiter or the banal prattle of the neighbour who trespasses on the final parting of Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard in *Brief Encounter*. And this leads to what Žižek calls “the best definition of Big Other”: as an invisible audience we project – “the one for whom we have to maintain appearances.”

“To be quite brutal,” says Žižek, “if you want to see where we are today, our basic ideological trends, in a distilled way: look at big Hollywood blockbusters.” It is in mainstream Hollywood cinema, with its arsenal of focus groups, script doctors, reshoots and executive second-guesses, that we see the Big Other projected and constructed on a billion-dollar scale. In Hollywood we find under construction arguably the biggest Other of all, and with it the most intensely concentrated expression of contemporary ideology.

Talking to Žižek in person, you have a slightly uncanny sense of continuity with Fiennes’s films. The ideas, anecdotes and jokes tumble out apace. Reference points abound from all areas of popular culture (German band Rammstein, Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’). The progress isn’t always linear but as in his texts, his digressions never finish in dead ends, but finally loop back around to their starting point. There’s also a conversational tone in play which eases the abstraction of some of Žižek’s thought. This is something Sophie Fiennes has been careful to build into their working arrangements. “We don’t have a script, there’s a framework, a selection of items but there’s no actual script,” she explains to me by phone. “I’m interested in the oral tradition of speech as opposed to text, written prose, so it’s very much part of how we work, I give him the free rein to try different things, and then I take it back to the cutting room and see.”

Žižek insists that Fiennes has done all the hard work in assembling these cues and then editing a line of argument out of them (“My Leni Riefenstahl”). The essayistic style of the two *Pervert’s Guides* required a particular balancing act: fair use law means that Fiennes can only use footage that’s under discussion: “It means that the film is denser than one would’ve perhaps wanted, because you can’t create space – you can only use material if something is being said about it.”

“I’m an optimist,” Fiennes says, when I ask her about the issue of accessibility and the scare-factor cultural theory still holds for many. “I actually believe that everybody is interested in those complex ideas, it depends how they come across it, and there’s nothing more exciting than having your mind expanded. I mean, that’s why people take drugs. That’s never been interesting for me, but how we experience reality is fascinating.”

The question of optimism versus pessimism comes up again as we talk: it’s a question which seems to recur through the film itself, quietly vexing its surface. I put it to Fiennes that the despite its bleakness, *Ideology* ends on a positive note, with a Walter Benjamin quote insisting on the possibility of redemptive change. “For me the real



*In Hollywood we find under construction arguably the biggest Other of all, and with it the most concentrated expression of contemporary ideology*

ending is Christ on the cross [Willem Dafoe in Scorsese’s *Last Temptation*], this point of subjective destitution. I think this shattering truth that we are so frightened to confront, this meaninglessness... you can’t end it there, you have to have the Resurrection, as it were.”

I ask Žižek if he sees any possibility for an escape from ideology’s corruptions and distortions? Is there any ‘outside’ to the cinematic Plato’s cave of ideology that the individual, or society, can ever reach? “I still naively believe that there is,” he says. “You know which film fails at this, but it’s a necessary failure? At the end of *The Matrix*, part one, it’s totally unclear when Neo promises to the people liberation, what does he mean? Does he mean we will destroy the Matrix and return to the real world? Or does he mean we will remain within the Matrix and we’ll just play with it, manipulate it? And that’s the question, can we step out of it, do we remain within? I claim that OK, if by ideology we mean really in a radical sense, the Big Other and so on, of course, we cannot step out, because in this case stepping out would have meant to speak some pure language which would only directly designate objects like, I say ‘table’, it only means ‘table’ and nothing more: all these implications, double entendres would disappear. But nonetheless I claim that what you can do is produce a gap which functions in a non-cynical way... and that’s what interests me again with today’s ideology.”

Žižek frequently denounces irony and cynicism – he argues in *Ideology* that *MASH* is no anti-army film: its sardonic but hard-working jesters are precisely the type of character needed to run an army well. Yet irony and cynicism can contain kernels of truth, disclosing tiny glimpses of clarity and revelation. And it’s clear that for Žižek, cynicism is a finely poised position: as we end, he is outlining a new project. “Ernst Lubitsch! Don’t you think he should be rehabilitated?” he enthuses. “*To Be or Not to Be*, *Trouble in Paradise* – my God, these are mega-films! They deserve close analysis. For example, the whole point of transgression in *Trouble in Paradise*, the point is what is paradise there? The only consistent explanation, I claim: paradise is precisely crime itself. The two of them are a couple in paradise, the rich woman who wants to seduce him is the voice of evil, in the end they return to paradise, let’s lead our happy life of criminals. A wonderful film!”

**FREE REIN**  
Sophie Fiennes, director of the two *Pervert’s Guide...* films, and Žižek’s ‘Leni Riefenstahl’

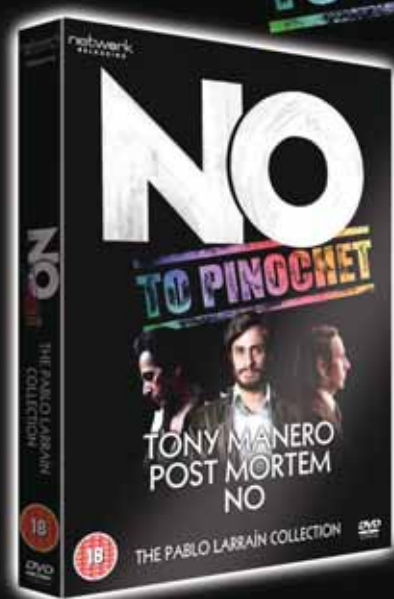


**The *Pervert’s Guide to Ideology* is released in the UK on 4 October, and is reviewed on page 87**

REVIEWED BY



# NO TO PINOCHET



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# KEEP ON RUNNING

On release, Claude Sautet's gangster film 'Classe tous risques' was lumped in with the despised 'cinéma de papa'. Half a century on, fans of authentically tough noir may find themselves asking: 'Who's the daddy?'

By Nick James



**OUT OF THE SHADOWS**  
Reluctant director Claude Sautet, top. Lino Ventura and Jean-Paul Belmondo, above, as Davos and Stark: Jean-Pierre Melville said "I believed in the friendship... absolutely". Opposite: Ventura not being friends with Gibelin (Marcel Dalio), the fence

The ex-con turned thriller writer turned screenwriter José Giovanni said of the actor Stan Krol that he had an "American physique". He was thinking of tough guys like Sterling Hayden and Lee Marvin – actors whose toughness wasn't just an act but came out of their lives, particularly their military service, hard experience that you can feel in their durability, the economy with which they move, the way they hold themselves and talk. That kind of physical presence is central to Claude Sautet's movie of Giovanni's gripping *Série noire* novel *Classe tous risques*, in which Krol was cast in a small but crucial role.

When it came to tough guys, Giovanni – real name Joseph Damiani, usually described as French-Swiss but born in Paris of a Corsican family – knew what he was talking about. He heard the story that was the basis of *Classe tous risques* in the early 1950s while languishing on death row – he had been mixed up in an extortion racket in Pigalle which was implicated in several deaths, though he didn't kill anyone himself. A guard told him about Abel "The Mammoth" Danos, who was to become the model for the fictional Abel Davos. He'd been placed in the cell next to Giovanni's and was now flat broke. Could Giovanni help him out? Giovanni offered a chocolate bar and a book of stamps and later got talking to a grateful Danos through the window. He heard a sad story of betrayal and decline "in about 30 sentences" and said he then forgot about it.

Giovanni evaded the guillotine when his sentence was commuted to 20 years hard labour, though he only served a few years. After he got out in 1956 he wrote *Le Trou*, a prison break novel based on a real escape attempt, which got published through the auspices of Albert Camus and Jean Cocteau amongst others; in 1960 Jacques Becker directed an austere beautiful film version, which was never a hit but is now regarded as a stone classic of the prison break genre. Hired by Marcel Duhamel for his *Série noire* imprint, Giovanni wrote *Le Deuxième Souffle*. It was only when stuck for material for his second book for Duhamel that Giovanni decided to fictionalise the story that Danos had told him, under the title *Classe tous risques*.

Jacques Becker gave a copy to Lino Ventura, who asked Giovanni if it would be OK if he played Abel Davos. It was Becker who, through a friend, had in 1953 discovered the ex-wrestler Ventura: on seeing his immense physical presence, Becker immediately offered him a part opposite Jean Gabin in *Touchez pas au grisbi*, and a huge career was launched. In 1958, Ventura had the

lead in an espionage drama called *Le Fauve est lâché* (*The Beast is Loose* aka *The Tiger Attacks*). Mid-shoot, the director, Maurice Labro, fell out with the producers and quit, and the producers simply said, "Sautet will finish it." At the time Claude Sautet had built a brilliant reputation as a fixer of bad films, first as an assistant director, then – because, he claimed, the only fun to be had was in fixing the narrative – as a script doctor. He is credited as both adaptor and scenarist on the film, but his work in polishing off the directing, including a crisp climactic chase scene, must have impressed Ventura, because he proposed to Giovanni that Sautet direct *Classe tous risques*. Which brings us back to Krol. His real name was Stan Divic, of Polish extraction, and he knew Giovanni from prison. When Sautet met him he was a salesman but was busy telling Giovanni about his plans to fly a plane underneath the Eiffel Tower. In a mirror image of what had happened to Ventura with Becker, Sautet hired him on the spot.

What made Sautet – a man who wasn't that drawn to directing – happy to take on *Classe tous risques* was its very physicality. In the film's magnificently brooding opening scenes Davos (Ventura) and Raymond (Krol) are arranging for Davos's wife Thérèse and two boys to slip by watching police and leave Milan by train for the border. At this point – in a film where a huge backstory is mostly ignored – Davos, former head of a tight Paris gang of thieves, has been on the run for years and must leave Italy, where the net is tightening around him, and get back to Paris. Once the family have been safely entrained, though, Davos and Raymond turn to getting some money. Watching Ventura and Krol prowling the streets as they wait for their moment to pounce on a pair of bank couriers, you have the same feeling of deep authenticity as when watching an American *noir*, but somehow deeper still. We know these men are outside society; their predatory stalking movement and hulking brutishness tell us everything about how they must live. Sautet, in a slightly dismissive statement, talked years later about how he believed then in "pure cinema" and so was determined to keep dialogue to the absolute minimum.

Despite a cast list that expands throughout, the film is mostly Ventura's. Krol's big moment comes after they snatch the money. It is Raymond (Krol) who takes the cash-case on his motorbike in another rip-roaring but realistic chase sequence, distracting the police while Davos drives his white car past a road block. They reunite

KOBAL COLLECTION (3)





successfully with Davos's family at the coast and hire a motor boat, which they hijack by the simple expedient of tossing the owner overboard with a rubber ring – something they achieve with impressive speed and strength. But on a French beach, elation ends. During a gunfight with a border patrol both Raymond and Thérèse are shot dead. All hope for Davos, you feel, lies bleeding on the shingle. He's left alone to care for his kids and find a way back to Paris. Only his old gang can help him.

But they've mostly become a shiftless untrustworthy lot, and instead of coming south themselves, as expected, they send Stark (Jean-Paul Belmondo), a young, easygoing tough, in an ambulance to make the rescue attempt. More of what unspools from there it would be a shame to reveal, though a relentless procession of fatalism and betrayal is to be expected. In this context, Ventura is perfect as the big man cast down. For all his seeming impregnability, Ventura has his vulnerable side: he has the simmering danger of a wounded gorilla, but at the same time a visibly broken heart and the air of a man for whom the clocks are all profoundly wrong. In one remarkable moment he literally pulls a man out of his chair from behind by his jacket collar. But over time we also see the furtive look in his eyes change from restlessness to wariness, the predator becoming the hunted.

*'Classe tous risques' had its own misfortune – released in the shadow of Godard's 'Breathless' and bypassed in the fuss over the nouvelle vague*

*Classe tous risques* had its own misfortune. It was released in the shadow of Godard's *Breathless* and got bypassed in the fuss over the *nouvelle vague*, ensuring that the reluctant Sautet went back to script fixing and forgot about directing for a while. Jean-Pierre Melville, however, saw it for the extraordinary work that it is and it's arguable that his own subsequent stark thrillers, *Le Doulos* (1963), *Le Deuxième Souffle* (1966) – from Giovanni's novel – *Le Samourai* (1967) and *Le Cercle rouge* (1970), though more in thrall to the iconography of the American crime film, would not have been as they are without the influence of *Classe tous risques*. Melville said "I believed in the friendship of Abel Davos and Stark absolutely. It is interior, and does not appear by means of dialogue. The two men's behaviour makes explicit their feelings, without either of them having to speak of their friendship. On the other hand, I was not able to believe in the friendship of Jules and Jim, even though they speak of it often."

For me, when watching Melville's 1960s crime films, Becker's best work, Jules Dassin's *Rififi* and especially *Classe tous risques*, the atmosphere seems to go further into despair than most American *noirs*. You'd expect the pessimistic fatalism to be more pronounced from the nation that gave us existentialism, but the themes of friendship and betrayal also feel more acute. I would suggest that this extra darkness of tone may be because during this period France and most French people were in denial about what happened under the Nazi occupation and the Vichy government during World War II. Not until the 1970s would the Gaullist myth of most people resisting occupation start to be shattered by researchers and historians. As if to illustrate what I mean, Bertrand Tavernier notes in the Criterion booklet that Sautet, for whom the theme of friendship would remain central, did not know until 20 years after he made *Classe tous risques* that the original Abel Danos had run with the Carlingue or 'French Gestapo'. This criminal gang of collaborators and torturers was run by Henri Lafont, Pierre Loutrel (the real Pierrot le fou) and ex-cop Pierre Bonny out of 93, rue Lauriston in the 16th arrondissement, Paris. No wonder he was friendless on death row. It is best not to keep this in mind, however, while watching the great Lino Ventura manage his dignified decline as he desperately searches for some kind of life and a school for his children. *Classe tous risques* is a magnificent film, whatever its anti-hero's origins.



***Classe tous risques* is rereleased in UK cinemas on 13 September. A Claude Sautet season runs until 8 October at BFI Southbank, London**

# JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE NIGHT

*In 'The Great Beauty', Paolo Sorrentino tracks his journalist protagonist through decadent Roman high society. But far more than a Fellini tribute act, the Neapolitan director is a richly individual stylist and moralist*

**By Pasquale Iannone**

Over the course of six features, the Naples-born director Paolo Sorrentino has established himself as one of contemporary cinema's most confident stylists. David Bordwell once quipped, not inaccurately, that the director "has never met a crane shot he didn't like". When you consider all of his films – *One Man Up* (2001), *The Consequences of Love* (2004), *The Family Friend* (2006), *Il Divo* (2008), *This Must Be the Place* (2011) and now *The Great Beauty* (2013) – two formal elements stand out. First, the use of extra-diegetic music to regulate the rhythm of sequences – the ethereal 'My Lady Story' by Antony and the Johnsons accompanying a volleyball match in *The Family Friend*, for instance, or the angular electro-pop of Cassius's 'Toop Toop' driving the montage of political murders in *Il Divo*. Secondly, the distinctive use of the 2.35:1 frame. Since *One Man Up*, which was shot in 1.85:1, Sorrentino has shot all of his features in the wider format, displaying an eye for precise, symmetrical compositions as sharp as Wes Anderson's, in combination with prowling, hypnotic forward tracking shots reminiscent of Terrence Malick.

That said, celebration of Sorrentino's stylistic virtuosity should not mask his consistent, intelligent exploration of a handful of key themes. Franco Vigni, in a 2012 monograph, notes that the director is fascinated by characters whose best days are behind them, "marginalised or living in wilful reclusion and locked either into indolence, impotence or solitude". This certainly fits a number of his central characters: ex-footballer Antonio

Pisapia in *One Man Up*; broker Titta Di Girolamo in *The Consequences of Love*; Geremia De Geremi, the loan-shark in *The Family Friend*; the politician Giulio Andreotti in *Il Divo*; and retired rock star Cheyenne in *This Must Be the Place*. But Vigni's schema appears a little reductive when applied to the two remaining protagonists in the Sorrentinian universe – Antonio's counterpart and namesake Tony Pisapia in *One Man Up* and *The Great Beauty*'s Gepino (Jep) Gambardella.

Tony and Jep (both played by Sorrentino favourite Toni Servillo) have an overriding vitality that just about sees them through their crises. In *One Man Up*, ageing crooner Tony Pisapia shrugs off a sex scandal, a 30-year cocaine habit, financial ruin and even incarceration. Towards the end of the film, he appears on television to give a long, tell-all interview about his life and career, delivering a defiant monologue that remains one of the highlights of Sorrentino's filmography. The director is so fond of this character that he has continued his adventures in literary form, changing his surname to Pagoda: a novel, *Everybody's Right*, published in 2010, was followed by a collection of short stories, *Tony Pagoda and His Friends*, in 2012. What keeps Sorrentino coming back to this character? He has described Tony Pisapia/Pagoda as a "great consumer" – of cocaine, women, food and indeed friendships – but said that behind his excesses is a deep humanity. The crucial fact that links Tony to *The Great Beauty*'s Jep, however, is something more wrenchingly personal. Sorrentino lost his mother

**UNRUFFLED**  
Tony Servillo as Jep Gambardella, the ageing journalist and socialite at the centre of *The Great Beauty*





and father in an accident when he was in his teens and these two characters have allowed him in some way to better understand his parents' generation.

Set in the shimmering grandeur of Rome, *The Great Beauty* is Sorrentino's most ambitious film to date. The story, co-written with Umberto Contarello, who also worked on *This Must Be the Place* and Bernardo Bertolucci's *Me and You* (2012), follows a 65-year-old journalist and socialite—Servillo's Jep—who has lived for nearly four decades in the Eternal City. Taking an early morning stroll along the Tiber, Jep recalls in voiceover how, arriving in Rome from Naples at the age of 26, he fell into "the vortex of high society": "But I didn't want to simply be a socialite. I wanted to become the king of socialites. And I succeeded. I didn't just want to attend parties. I wanted the power to make them fail."

The Roman setting and flâneur-journalist lead character make comparisons with *La dolce vita* (1960) unavoidable. Like Federico Fellini (and indeed Pier Paolo Pasolini), Sorrentino is not a native Roman. In the preface to a photo diary of his new film he describes the city as "the greatest holiday resort in the world" and says that, despite having made his home in the capital, he still doesn't completely understand it: "But I don't really want to understand it. Like all the things we understand completely, the risk of disappointment is always round the corner [...] I'm contented just to get a sense of it, to pass through it, like a tourist without a return ticket."

You need only watch the first five minutes of *The Great Beauty* to see this attitude reflected in image and sound. The opening scenes take place under the blazing sun, in and around the church of San Pietro in Montorio on the Janiculum hill. Sorrentino alternates between flowing exterior shots (a woman reading a newspaper, a man splashing himself with water from a fountain, a group of Japanese tourists listening intently to their tour guide) and shots inside the church, where an all-female choir is performing David Lang's starkly minimalist 'I Lie'—each voice rising and falling like the breath of Rome itself. Sorrentino has always talked of his opening scenes as representing a few moments of directorial indulgence before the machinations of narrative take over. This is essentially what we have here: a stand-alone sequence, a vision of overwhelming beauty shot through with characteristic black humour. A case, for one unfortunate bystander, of see Rome and die.

Like many artists and filmmakers before him, Sorrentino is fascinated by Rome's capacity to reconcile the sacred and the profane. After the opening scenes we cut to a rooftop terrace: we're deep into the night and Jep's birthday party is in full swing. The calm reverence of the opening is replaced by a neon-soaked throng of partygoers, bejewelled, tanned limbs flailing around like figures from Ernie Barnes paintings such as 'Sugar Shack' (1971). Lang's piece is replaced by Italo disco, which slows down as Jep Gambardella emerges from the crowd, a cigarette sandwiched in a wide, contented grin. "Not even Paul Newman can match his blue eyes," Sorrentino and Contarello note in their screenplay: "Jep has an impressive physique for his age and the hands of an organist. His grey hair thrown back nonchalantly like Helmut Berger in his prime."

During the party sequence, we're introduced to several supporting characters, including two of Jep's closest

*Sorrentino has always been attracted to the larger-than-life, the eccentric, but his approach toward such characters is rarely aloof or derisive*

confidants. Struggling middle-aged actor Romano, played by Carlo Verdone, is a tireless champion of *The Human Apparatus*, Jep's one and only novel, published decades earlier. Dadina (Giovanna Vignola), a dwarf, is Jep's straight-talking editor, who bluntly tells him that he hasn't had the career his talent deserves ("It's because I became prematurely cynical and disillusioned," he says).

Sorrentino's way of living in and appreciating Rome is reflected in his protagonist. The film is less a linear narrative than a series of impressionistic encounters. Jep is a modern flâneur, trying not only to make sense of the city but also to better understand his own failings in life and in art. He strikes up an unlikely friendship with the daughter of an old friend who manages a Via Veneto nightclub. To her father's chagrin, 42-year-old Ramona (Sabrina Ferilli) is not only unmarried, she still works as a stripper in his club, unfazed by the arrival of younger women from Eastern Europe. Ramona is wary of Jep at first, but soon a tender rapport develops. Ferilli's delicate performance stands in sharp contrast to a riotous extended cameo by Serena Grandi, the impossibly voluptuous star of many Italian sex comedies of the 80s, as well as more sophisticated erotica such as Tinto Brass's *Miranda* (1985). In *The Great Beauty* she plays Lorena, a drug-addled former starlet who we first see bursting out of Jep's birthday cake like a glittery version of Saraghina, the rumba-dancing prostitute in Fellini's *8½* (1963).

Sorrentino has always been attracted to the larger-than-life, the oddball, the eccentric, but his approach toward such characters is rarely aloof or derisive. Geremia in *The Family Friend*, Andreotti in *Il Divo* and Cheyenne in *This Must Be the Place* are all examples. *The Great Beauty's* Jep, far more conventionally presentable and well spoken, is the elegant observer rather than the oddball, the prism through which Sorrentino surveys the rituals of high society. Servillo's character glides through the film unhurried, seemingly unruffled, always immaculately turned out despite the succession of late nights. His manner is that of someone who's seen it all, found most of it underwhelming, but is still ready to be amazed—Servillo's measured vocal delivery reflects this brilliantly.

When he and Ramona are invited to a funeral, Jep explains to her that it represents "the high society event par excellence". He makes sure that she has chosen the right dress and takes her through the rules, reminding







her that “when one attends a funeral, one is setting foot on the stage”. One should never cry, as this would mean ‘stealing the limelight’ from the grieving family. But at the mass itself Jep is called upon to be a pallbearer and – remarkably – breaks down in tears. Has raw, honest emotion shattered his self-imposed funeral etiquette? Or is Jep taking his performance to the next level? Sorrentino leaves it ambiguous.

At a Botox ‘ceremony’, Jep watches a stream of wealthy men and women of all ages, shapes and sizes line up to get their fill, the surgeon cheerfully administering €700 injections as if he were handing out Ferrero Rocher. Luca Bigazzi, Sorrentino’s regular DoP, uses overhead key lighting to give the sequence an otherworldly sheen reminiscent of Robert Richardson’s work, especially on Martin Scorsese’s *Casino* (1995) – a film with which it has much in common. Apart from stylistic links – lighting, masterful use of music and voice-over, probing camera moves – both feature lead characters who despite a certain outward confidence struggle to come to terms with the realities of their surroundings. The Scorsese link goes back even further – in *One Man Up*, for instance, the bravura one-take Steadicam shot following Tony Pisapia as he enters a nightclub clearly harks back to the Copacabana sequence in *Goodfellas* (1990).

In *The Great Beauty*, as in all his previous films, Sorrentino takes full advantage of the widescreen frame to compose a series of uncanny images, the most arresting of which often feature animals. From the bear looming in the corner of Dadina’s office to the giraffe that Jep sees vanish as part of a magician’s act to the swarm of flamingos that settle on his balcony, these are images that would have made Buñuel smile, never mind Fellini or Scorsese. Don Luis would doubtless have appreciated the director’s idiosyncratic use of religious figures and imagery, too; it was Sorrentino, after all, who began *The*

*Family Friend* with a close-up of a nun buried up to her neck on a deserted beach.

Towards the end of *The Great Beauty*, Sorrentino has Jep spend time with two very different representatives of the church. While Roberto Herlitzka’s Cardinal Bellucci can’t seem to get through a sentence without offering cooking tips to anyone who’ll listen, the elderly Sister Maria (Giusi Merli) hasn’t eaten a proper meal in years and lives a frugal life dedicated to the poor. Surprisingly, she is also an admirer of *The Human Apparatus*; her presence spurs Jep to finally embark on a second novel. The film ends with the first lines of his new work: “Everything ends with death. But before, there is life. Hidden underneath the blah blah blah, buried under the chatter and noise, silence and emotion, emotion and fear – the tiny, sporadic flashes of beauty.” This has an unmistakable flavour of the French novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline, who Sorrentino cites directly at the beginning of *The Great Beauty*. Could it be that the overriding influence on Sorrentino’s film is not Fellini or any other filmmaker, but the innovative prose stylist of *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932)?

In a recent post on the New Yorker blog, Adelaide Docx argues that “In Céline’s world, human suffering is on the same footing as human pleasure; there is no system of abstract truth to which one can appeal.” She goes on to quote a line from *Journey to the End of the Night* about finding solace in human contact. “There is something touching about this insight from one of literature’s most infamous misanthropes,” Docx continues: “the only place where, finally, we might find shelter from our suffering is in company – among people.” If Jep Gambardella – Sorrentino’s own misanthropic protagonist – has learned anything from four decades of the Roman sweet life, it seems to be precisely this.



**The Great Beauty is out now in cinemas and is reviewed on page 75**

**SACRED AND PROFANE**  
Jep with his stripper friend Ramona (Sabrina Ferilli), above, and with cookery obsessed Cardinal Bellucci (Roberto Herlitzka), left

*Clerk, boxer, policeman, lowlife, a Stepney-born Peter Lorre and a Fool (or a Lear) in waiting: one way or another, Eddie Marsan is taking Hollywood by stealth*

**By David Thomson**

**When did you first** see Eddie Marsan, so that you searched out his name and promised to remember? For me it was watching the BBC's *Little Dorrit*, just five years ago, and feeling the dignity and intelligence he brought to Pancks, the debt-collector and detective, while making sure that the man was small, uneasy, just a little furtive, but secretly dedicated. I couldn't take my eyes off him. Now, that was late in his career, but then I realised he had been there before, several times, in the corner of my eye. He was on the oil rig in Isabel Coixet's *The Secret Life of Words* (2005). He'd been Reg in Mike Leigh's *Vera Drake*, but Reg was the sort of person not even the family noticed. Suddenly an image came back to me; he had been there, a timid Tammany clerk, in Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*. Where did this actor come from? Was he Irish, English, American? What nationality is an actor? I started to become like a Pancks, doing some work on Mr Marsan.

Until I felt I'd like to write about him. The editor said, "You must have seen *The World's End*." I hadn't then, but a week later I got the chance, and, yes, Marsan is there, but I hate the film. Not that there is any reason why a remarkable actor shouldn't be in some dreadful movies. After all, Eddie Marsan at the age of 45 has already got 95 credits. So, no, I told the editor, I hadn't seen *The World's End*, but I was wild about Marsan in this new television show *Ray Donovan*.

That is a mini-series from Showtime (on Sky Atlantic in the UK), created and written by Ann Biderman, and di-

rected in its first two episodes by Allen Coulter. It's hard to say what the series is going to be about apart from violence. If it's going to go seven seasons then it'll have to find a lot of story, as yet undreamed of. But Liev Schreiber plays Ray, a big-time fixer in Los Angeles, working for powerful clients. He has three brothers in the city, or two brothers and one half. The two brothers are wrecks, while Liev Schreiber is tall, strong, dark, not quite handsome, but impressive, and very assured – until he hears that Dad has just been let out of prison, in Massachusetts. He was there for 20 years, and Ray tells everyone that he's wicked, evil and bad news. Jon Voight plays Dad with charm and panache, but you can believe Ray.

Eddie Marsan is Terry, one of the brothers. He runs a shabby gym for fighters and he was a boxer himself. But his right hand trembles, and its arm is carried awkwardly; we're not sure yet whether this is physical damage, neurological or Dad. But whenever he's there, you look at the arm and its shiver. A lot of story is still to come, but Marsan has made us care for Terry from the outset. He is shy, beaten down, wounded, but he would like a woman of his own. Terry doesn't talk much, but sometimes on a mini-series an actor is happy to go with that because, face it, the writers haven't worked the whole thing out yet. Already, after a few weeks, Terry has found a woman, discovered that she's married and that the husband beats her. So Eddie moved in, like a Roberto Duran – who would have thought Eddie had that in him. Then

**A RELIABLE MAN**  
Eddie Marsan as Pancks, rent-collector-cum-detective, in *Little Dorrit* (2008), right; and as ex-boxer Terry, one of the brothers of the LA fixer in the Showtime series *Ray Donovan*

# A GHOST IN THE MACHINE







**HANGING COMMITTEE**  
In *Pierpoint* (2005), below,  
Marsan plays 'Tish' Corbitt,  
a client of the pub landlord/  
hangman in more ways than  
one. With Timothy Spall  
as Albert Pierpoint and  
Juliet Stevenson as his wife

he led a touching birthday memorial to the brothers' long-dead sister, and the show seemed like his. The producers should just watch Eddie, and learn. He's giving clues, and I suspect somehow Dad screwed Terry up. There's another episode in a few days, and I'm ready. They had better not kill Terry off, but I can't believe everyone's going to come out of *Ray Donovan* breathing.

So there he is in that show, passing in Los Angeles, this actor who was born in Stepney and raised in Bethnal Green. His own Dad was a lorry driver and Mum was a school dinner lady. Seeing is believing, and Eddie looks working-class, not especially well educated, humble (if he has to be) but aware of what's happening. It's the way he watches things that teaches the viewer to attend to him in the first place. Once I was looking properly, Marsan fell into place: he had been the journalist, Jack Whitehead, in two parts of *Red Riding* – not so much a journalist as a gossip, a spy or an informer. Pancks had proved himself a reliable man in *Little Dorrit*, but Whitehead was stained by the dark rot of *Red Riding*. So Marsan played low-lives? Except that he was magnificent as John Houseman – a man who loved being a snob and a fraudulent English gentleman – in *Me and Orson Welles* (2009).

That's when you begin to see that a good actor might be better still, if the world caught on. For instance, at that point, I would have said that Eddie would make an ideal Fool with Michael Gambon as Lear. Couldn't fail? But don't let that deceive you: suppose Gambon was the Fool with Eddie as the daft King? Wouldn't happen? Not until it does. Just imagine a tiny Lear and a hulking Fool – of course, it's different but maybe we need to wake up with a play like *Lear* and make it real again.

You need to love supporting players – after all, they're just like you. Take *Snow White and the Huntsman*. A film for children? Costing \$170 million, with a director, Rupert Sanders, making his first feature film. What's he going to do in his terror, wondering whether the trees that come to life will work? Wondering if he'll survive? So he has this little thing with his Snow White (Kristen Stewart) which may have started as just a way to get her to relax and shall we say act? Or maybe he was courting Stewart because he was afraid of approaching Charlize Theron and it was all he could do to gaze at her astonishing beauty – taking the bath in milk, for instance. So with all that stuff going down, he told Casting, just get

me dwarves I can trust. It's a wonderful group – Beith, Muir, Quert, Duir, Gort, Nion and Gus – and the casting is sublime: Ian McShane, Johnny Harris, Ray Winstone, Nick Frost, Toby Jones, Eddie Marsan (as Duir) and Bob Hoskins. Those familiar faces are put on small bodies, and there was fuss over that. Plus Bob Hoskins was doing his last film and there are shots where that grand guy is having trouble with his lines. So Sanders had problems to handle, enough to make him sigh with pleasure because Toby Jones and Eddie could do it without much fuss. That's not to attack the director: I like the film a lot. But Eddie is the kind of actor who is cast and then thanked because he was perfect. In *Snow White* he's lost most of his hair and he sounds very Bethnal Green. But it's like studying Peter Lorre or Felix Bressart.

Such players have humility, a helpless professionalism that turns up and does it, knowing that at six feet dripping with milk Charlize Theron is going to get the interviews, while Kristen Stewart is the reason the film is being made. So, the director says something like, "Eddie, you know what to do?" And Eddie has Duir to himself for six or seven days. He's free and other directors see him and they feel the freedom and the instincts that let it survive. So he keeps getting cast. This is a man, who, so far, has worked for Spielberg, Malick, Scorsese, Mike Leigh, Michael Mann, Alejandro González Iñárritu.

Moreover, this fecundity makes a quest out of a filmmaker's life. He was Titus Oates in *Charles II: The Power and the Passion* (2003), he was Dimitri in a US TV *Crime and Punishment* (1998) with Patrick Dempsey, Ben Kingsley and Julie Delpy, and he was Tish in *Pierpoint* (2005) – I did see that, a tasty little film – one of the many men Timothy Spall hanged. Eddie has a face that has always expected execution. There are other films, like *Gangster No. 1* (2000), but I have a sort of principle about not seeing British films with 'gangster' in the title.

I did see his *Moby Dick* (2011). I was searching for a Chelsea game on television, chasing channels, and there was William Hurt running the *Pequod* to hell (Hurt did a sweet trick: he went from being a star to a supporting player), and there was Eddie as Stubb, the second mate, all too well aware that he shouldn't have shipped out on this voyage. Then there's *London Boulevard* (2010), directed by William Monahan (who wrote *The Departed*). I've never seen that. But it's Colin Farrell trying to look after Keira Knightley and I think Eddie is a copper. But he's a corrupt copper – makes all the difference: every Lestrade wants to run wild sometimes. The reviews weren't good but that doesn't mean Eddie doesn't have four or five minutes to treasure, the way Cyril Cusack did in *The Small Back Room*.

Just as I was finishing, one more Eddie picture came my way: *Still Life* by Uberto Pasolini. He plays a man who is a clerk of death. Whenever people die alone, Eddie (John May) tries to find some next of kin. He is diligent, obsessive even, because the search masks the absence of his own life. May wears grey, and does his grey duty. The film ends too tidily and sentimentally, and that rather betrays the Kafkaesque presence that Marsan brings to it. He's the star at last, and it's a picture about ghosts. But there's more already: *Southcliffe* on television and Irvine Welsh's *Filth*. Eddie keeps coming like the Chinese infantry or one of those boxers who had twenty fights a year. He's not a raging bull, but a dogged and lovable ghost.

Eddie looks  
working-class,  
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# JAMES BENNING

Long famous – or at least legendary – for the formal rigour and patience of his landscape films, and for his devotion to 16mm, the American filmmaker and teacher has now embraced digital technology and is even allowing a DVD release of his work. Here, he talks about manipulation, reality, liberty, and the pleasures of watching paint dry. **Interview by Nick Bradshaw**

Look. Listen. Pay attention. Be alert, attuned, patient. Heed your own senses; hone them, heighten them. Focus, engage the moment, be here now – and notice how anyway thoughts, memories, expectations, presumptions and self-distractions come teeming in. James Benning's movies pose an idealistic challenge, a spur to unattainably pure observation, but this recognition of the subjectivity of experience is also part of their plan.

To newcomers, Benning's cinema can come as a shock, even intimidate. The spartan rigour of its design makes most narrative movies look like victims of attention deficit disorder (and their audiences victims of informational spoon-feeding). Harking back to the actualities of early, pre-story cinema, it extends their direct gaze – exploring the properties of both the world and our perceptual apparatus, typically with a static camera – into increasingly extreme duration. *One Way Boogie Woogie* (1978), an early marker of Benning's maverick formalism, deployed shots uniformly 60 seconds long (while carving up the frame in a flat tribute to Mondrian). The three parts of his California Trilogy – *El Valley Centro* (2000), *Los* (2001) and *Sogobi* (2002) – each presented 35 shots two-and-a-half minutes long, the running time of a 100-foot roll of 16mm film; *13 Lakes* (2005) and *Ten Skies* (2005) captured their titular subjects in ten-minute takes, or the larger 400-foot rolls. When in 2008 this valiant keeper of the celluloid faith finally relinquished his beloved 16mm for digital video – in despair at the prospects for film projection more than production – the new technology emboldened him further. *Ruhr* (2009), his one venture wholly outside the United States, to the industrial heartlands of Düsseldorf (he comes from German emigrant stock), ended with an hour-long study of a smokestack at sunset, while experiments like *John Krieg Exiting the Falk Corporation in 1971* (2010) and *Faces* (2011) each used digital editing programs to slow down short found-footage fragments (from Benning's

own early work *Time and a Half* (1972) and John Cassavetes' 1968 film of the same name, respectively) to feature length. (Other Benning films have allowed their subjects to dictate the length of a shot: readings from *New York Times* articles in *Deseret* (1995), trains passing through the frame in *RR* (2008), cars in *small roads* (2011), the length of a smoke in *20 Cigarettes* (2011).)

Benning grew up in a blue-collar Milwaukee, Wisconsin community which tore itself apart in the race battles of the 1960s; he recalls being beaten up by former neighbours when he became a civil rights organiser. He studied maths on a baseball scholarship at the local university, and won note as a rare Midwesterner in the 70s American experimental film scene. In this most collaborative, often corporate medium he may stand out as a rugged individualist, clocking up hundreds of thousands of solo car miles to find and report back on the sights and sounds of his country, and making frequent reference to the lineage of American outsider art that starts with Henry David Thoreau, whose cabin at Walden Pond Benning has reconstructed in the forests of the Sierra Nevada (along with another by Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber). Yet as his movies contemplate landscape as a function of time, so they reveal history, from the specifics of his own autobiography and forays-with-camera to the whole bitter chronicle of American colonial

and industrial conquest, class struggle, violence and ecological ravages. "All my films," he has said, "are an attempt to ask, how liberated am I? Where did I come from? How am I progressing?"

In 1987 Benning left the New York art scene to teach film at the California Institute of the Arts, outside Los Angeles; he has lived since then in Val Verde, an outpost of that outpost. Along with his 'Math as art' class, his most famous teaching innovation has been his 'Listening and Seeing' class, essentially an extension of his own working process, in which students are taken out into a variety of landscapes, be it desert, an oil refinery, a ghost town or Skid Row, and asked to pay attention. His movies, meanwhile, have influenced numerous others – most clearly his peers and mentees in America, but one can find echoes as far afield as Chantal Akerman, Patrick Keiller, Abbas Kiarostami, even Michael Haneke...

As well as revisiting and remixing old work – like John Smith, another filmmaker who has made structuralism his own – Benning has belatedly made his peace with digital exhibition, releasing an ongoing series of his old films on DVD as part of a donation of his archive to the Austrian Film Museum. I spoke to him in Vienna during one of his regular visits to the museum to show new work.

**NB: What finally pushed you to putting your films on DVD?**

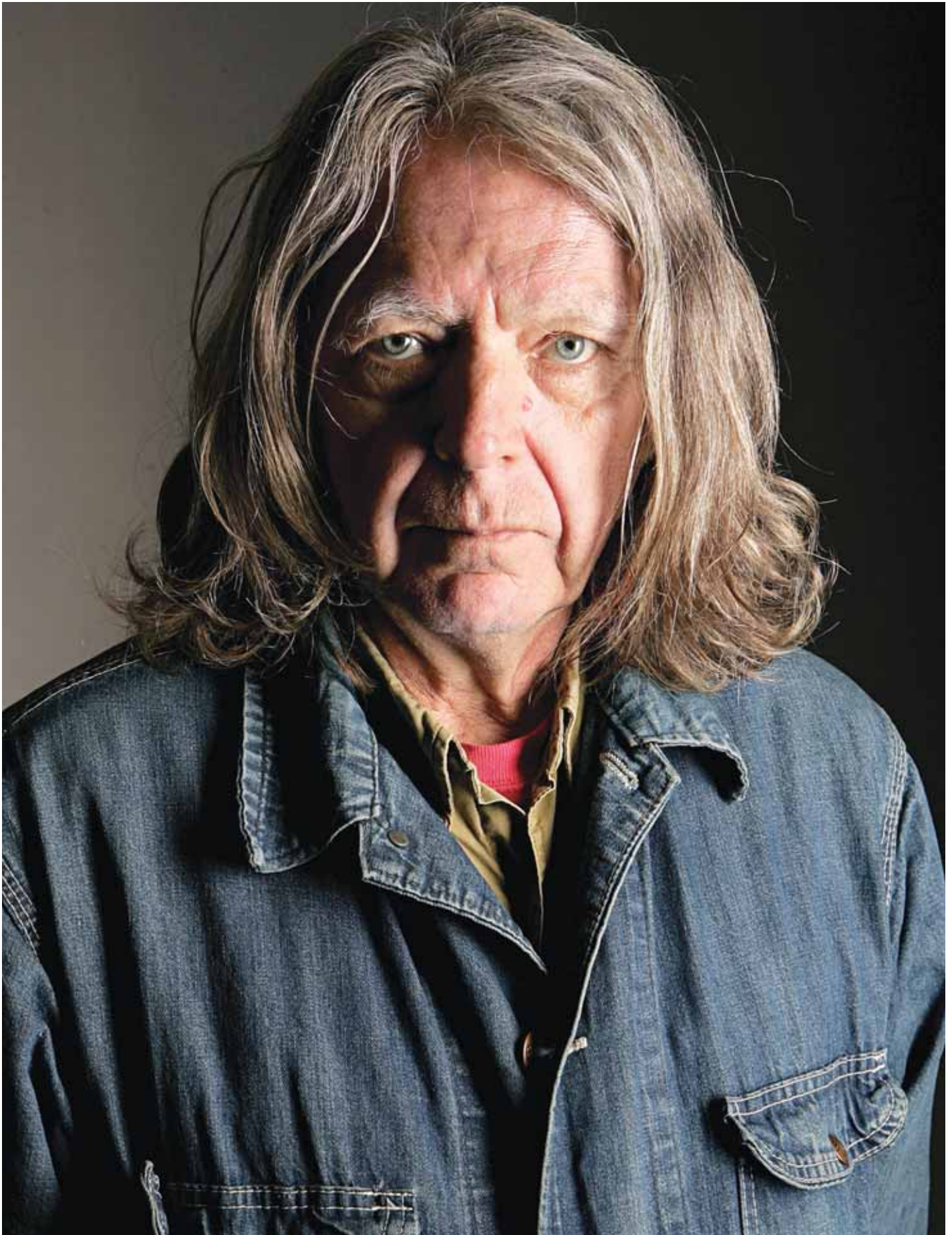
**JB:** I realised I had 30 years' worth of work that needed proper storage and archiving. And to be fair to the work it should be properly done: I just didn't have the time or money to properly archive it. If I tried it would have pretty much consumed the rest of my life, and I'd stop making work and be a slave to what I had already done.

The Film Museum had always been a great supporter of my work. It's a perfect place for me because I've never been categorised properly – I don't know if I fit into categorising. I found an institution that loves film and doesn't have a narrow vision of it; they care about what they think are good films.



*casting a glance* (2007)







When Alex [Horwath, the museum's director] offered to store it I said he could just have it all, with the idea that they would properly archive it over the years, because I knew it was a huge job. As part of that archiving process, they thought they should also make DVDs to make the films available. And at that point I thought it was a great idea, mainly because there seemed to be a demand to see those early films, and I couldn't provide a solution by renting prints any more. The internet's made my work talked about more; it's actually found its place in the world, where before it was in little corners. I've been holding out for years not to make DVDs, but now the writing's on the wall. And you get a sense of the film, anyways.

**NB: When I watched a retrospective of your films at CalArts in 2007 you were finishing your final 16mm films, and your career seemed very linear, from finding your themes and identity in your early experiments to the rigorous distillations of your landscape films, in which you stripped away text, voiceover, people... Now it seems obviously spherical, with all these different experiments and echoes and reworkings of earlier films.**

**JB:** True, and that's because of the switch to digital. I thought, okay, I'm in a new medium, and I can think back to when I first started making films and didn't know what direction I was going in. I experimented, not in the sense of 'experimental films' but real experimentation: what can a camera do with this lens? What can it do with that?

I've gone through pretty much that same process now with digital filmmaking and became more playful – because I wasn't aware of what this digital technology could actually do, and wanted [to find out]. So in a way there's a circular trajectory, because I'm re-learning a whole set of variables like I did when I first started. And that's exciting. And by doing that I started to think about what those works were, what I liked in them and how I could pluck out things I liked and expand them by digitally copying them and slowing them down, re-editing them... things I'd never have thought of doing with film because it would have involved optical printing and taken years, but which I can now do in an afternoon.

And it costs me nothing once I've bought the equipment because I do everything myself; if I don't like it I can just erase it and say 'Okay, I experimented for a week and it didn't work', or 'Great, I have a new film and it didn't cost me a penny.' And it's rethinking what I did, looking at ideas from 20-30 years ago in a whole fresh way.

**NB: Might you have been this prolific sooner if you'd moved to digital earlier?**

**JB:** I don't think I would have. The earlier digital equipment didn't render images quite as good as they do now. The only video images that I actually liked before the current camera I have [a Sony EX3] goes way back to the late 80s when they made these little video cameras called... Hi8, were they? They were very painterly and absolutely gorgeous. At that moment I thought I might buy one of those and start to play with it. That was around the time I found a Pixel[Vision] camera and played with that for a few months before deciding against it. I made a few [videos], but none of them exist any more

because they were all on those little quarter-inch audio tapes that just degraded. Then my daughter [Sadie] got one and proved me wrong, that they really were amazing cameras.

**NB: Do you think future moviemakers who'll never have touched a film strip will have lost something? Should they experience analogue filmmaking?**

**JB:** I would tend to advise them not. Let's see where you can go without having that prior [experience]. I'm making digital works now with the whole set of ideas I'm bringing from the past – still thinking in terms of optical printing and mimicking things from the old film world – which I suppose is valuable, if you know those things, but maybe that's holding me back from really breaking into what this new stuff can do, collaging and all these other programs. Maybe you should start to work with totally new ideas that aren't connected to film at all.

I don't know if that's good advice or not. That's a complex thing, how the human brain works, what bogs you down. Maybe if you don't know the past you won't develop those prejudices in the future? Maybe our track record as human beings is so bad that we shouldn't remember the past? People say 'Never forget'; maybe it's good to forget, sometimes.

**NB: It's interesting about the collaging: one of your new movies, *small roads*, ostensibly looks less of a rupture with your landscape films than, say, *Ruhr* or *Twenty Cigarettes*...**

**JB:** I was trying to make a film that went back to my prior filmmaking and again this circle back to ideas of our landscape cut by the railroad track now being cut by the road...

And I also used all this new digital technology to make the image look more like the images that

*That's so brilliant, to make a film that would require such concentration that you would notice paint drying*



*Grand Opera* (1979)

I used to make in film. Rather than like when I made *John Krieg*, where I stretched 14 seconds of worker leaving the factory to 71 minutes, with this digital frame-blending that gives it multiple exposures and makes it like Duchamp's *Nude Ascending a Staircase*, with its multiple views of movement. And depending on the pan and zoom of the camera, [the movie] keeps breaking apart and coming back together – a normal image that splits into many facets and then comes back. That digital technology is out of this world; I've never seen anything like it before. It's a button on the camera, changing 100 to 0.3 per cent in Final Cut Pro's speed setting and all of a sudden you've got this incredibly Duchampian painting in front of your face; you can't see that way and it's beautiful.

And yet in *small roads* I'm doing much more manipulation – it took me months to do – and you're not aware of it. It looks more real than any of the films that I've made. I'm trying to make real sense of landscape by using real collages that are really highly manipulated but undetected. So that's an interesting way that the frame can be torn and multiplied by technical means, and completely collaged together in a way that looks absolutely real too. The equipment can take you in either direction – to the total abstracting of the image or towards a much closer reality.

For instance, if I'm filming in an area where generally there's thunderstorms that come



New made old: *small roads* (2011), a digital movie in the vein of Benning's late-celluloid landscapes





**American Dreams (lost and found) (1984)**

through every afternoon, but the day I happen to be there it's sunny, that's more false than collaging it to look like what it generally is, right? When I shot those cattle on the side of the road I was hoping for afternoon rainstorm... and it just didn't happen. The next day I was a hundred miles or so away and there's the rainstorm. Different landscape completely, but I simply tilted the camera up to eliminate the hills and shot the sky; then I'd just bring that in, crop it and you can fuzz the edge of the image so it just falls in and you don't even notice it's a different place. So in a way it's manipulation, but in *small roads* everything I manipulated made it more real to me: I'm trying to reinforce reality. And in *John Krieg* it's the opposite: everything I did makes you see like you're on some psychedelic drug and in some weird time-warp.

**NB: Which raises the question: how important is indexical documentary to you, in terms of the image imprinting what you find in the world?**

**JB:** See, I don't believe that's possible. Because the biggest manipulation is the frame, and what you leave out and how you take everything else out of context by taking just the small portion of the world. And therefore it's silly to talk about 'complete reality'. It's always your point of view what you leave out and where you point the camera... A lot of people want my films to be that, but they've never been that. They've always been a selection, always been colour-corrected, always been highly manipulated with sound. They've always taken a real point of view from what I believe in, and I am full of prejudice. And those prejudices are on the screen.

But then when you make it more real and try to eliminate your prejudice by collaging then people say 'Oh, that's worse'. My argument is it's better; it's closer to reality. I don't see it as cheating. I saw it as playful and having fun, because it was really fun to be able to do that and have that control. And of course, Hollywood images have been doing that for all these corporations, 'Magic Light Lantern' or whatever the names of them are [laughs]...

**NB: Dreamworks!**

**JB:** You know them. I mean, they've been doing this brilliant manipulation, but in more fantasy work or science fiction or whatever. But I suppose it happens in normal narrative films too.

**NB: Do you have any interest in mainstream cinema these days?**

**JB:** I don't at all. CalArts has a film class where they show a film every Friday from rather new directors or new films from all over the world, and that's my education, basically. I have no



**El Valley Centro (2000)**

desire to go to any store-bought films in the mall.

**NB: You don't have any sense of kinship or how you've influenced other filmmakers?**

**JB:** Lately, and probably always, a major influence has been Warhol, just because of his interest in the everyday, and also in duration. Michael Snow and Hollis Frampton have been influences from the very beginning. And contemporaries I connect with are Sharon Lockhart and Peter Hutton. Sharon's a generation back, but we share a lot of ideas. But I don't see a lot of films. I should see more.

**NB: I know you've seen Lisandro Alonso's films, for instance. They seem part of a big movement in arthouse cinema over the past decade or so that works with long shots, asks for patience and is obviously a reaction to contemporary Hollywood. What do you think of the term 'slow cinema', which some people have tried applying to films that work with duration?**

**JB:** I always believe that any learning comes through concentration and patience, and that you have to train yourself to have that patience and to perceive. That isn't slow to me, that's hard work. It may be slow in the movement of things but it isn't slow in the stuff that's going on in your mind when you watch something for a long time and you see very minimal changes: you start to learn from that. So time is a function of becoming more intelligent, I think;



**Landscape Suicide (1986)**

you need to take time. The word 'slow' seems to belittle that process. How can you rush that?

I remember years ago when I saw a neighbourhood film with Gene Hackman... *Night Moves* [1975]. He's talking about an Eric Rohmer movie and says 'It's like watching paint dry', and when he said that I thought 'Oh, that's what I have to aspire to!' That's so brilliant, to make a film that would require such concentration that you would notice paint drying. And then to actually feel the way the paint dries, the way light would come off the wall in a different way when it's [wet and dry]: as that transformation comes I think you could learn a lot about light. I'm kind of joking, but at the same time I'm serious. That's not slow, that's hard work and learning.

**NB: Do you think digital technology is making the world increasingly distractable?**

**JB:** Some people are learning how to work with it so it doesn't completely destroy their autonomy. Like, for me, the computer offers complete autonomy in my work; I don't need a lab, I can do all this stuff by myself. And because of that I can work constantly now. But then maybe the more important autonomy of control, of what your life is about, has gone. Now I'm the slave to this machine, working and concentrating on what I want to do. I like that, but at the same time I'm not sure it's healthy. It's something one has to negotiate.



**Factory walkouts then and now: John Krieg Exiting the Falk Corporation in 1971 (2010)**

**NB:** Do you leave your computer behind when you go out to your wood cabin?

**JB:** No, I almost always take it up there because I edit on it, and get a lot of work done. But that's where I have it more under control because up there I can work for four hours, get a lot done, it's quiet. Shut it off and then go out and chop wood because I have to get so much wood ready for the winter. And then I can go for a walk, enjoy the outside and have this connection to being in a real place rather than in front of a computer. One you can smell and taste, walk through and be part of. So it's a stronger connection to life.

**NB:** You've had people in your films before, but *Twenty Cigarettes* is obviously noteworthy in focusing on faces for its duration. Can you imagine now making a film with even more people, or more than one person in the frame? Or is that just not you?

**JB:** I have a collaboration planned with a friend who wants to shoot in small rural bars, which would involve a lot of people. I'm very nervous about going in, befriending people and then filming them so I'm putting it off...

I just did a film with my 'acting bad' class called *After Warhol*, where we watched a few of the Warhol screen tests and then mimicked them. It's not what he does but a manipulation; I got them to act as they thought a screen test would be in a Warhol sense, and then I recontextualised it so we could talk about how acting might not be screened the way you thought you acted. Especially today with these manipulations and green screens: groups of people going 'aaaaah!', and the monster isn't even there. It's a nice little film, with an amazingly diverse group of students from all different cultures.

Then two years ago I made an installation from *North on Evers* (1991), which is 90-some minutes long and has 60 short portraits, each five to ten seconds long, of people I met when I did this motorcycle trip around the US, along with the landscapes I found. I simply slowed down the portraits at different rates so they'd all be about a minute long, and I could make a 60-minute silent film from the portraits of the 60 people. So I've started to film people again – there's 60 people in that film, although usually just one person in the frame, sometimes two.

I've also been thinking about using text in a film again, which I haven't done for a while. And reading it myself. So I'm going in a lot of directions, but I am most uncomfortable dealing with people. I'm nervous like they are in front of the camera. That's why when I shot *Twenty Cigarettes* I got out of there so I wouldn't spread this nervousness. And they were my friends, so it was easy; as far as going into a bar and filming strangers, that's more stressful.

Now, I just toured the four sub-level floors of storage here at the natural history museum [in Vienna]. The director asked me to come see it and was kind enough to take me down there. You go into the 'Noah's ark room' where it's all stuffed animals, two by two. Another is all pelts, and a whole wall of human skulls; all this stuff that's out of view. He invited me back to make a film there. So I'm thinking I might like to do that.

**NB:** It sounds like a Hitchcock scene.

**JB:** It's very bizarre. And when I was going



*RR* (2008)

round the museum I was watching the little kids look at stuff and got this idea of teaching a Listening and Seeing class in the museum with children. To look at the museum carefully with more patience and more time, and see if kids are even able to do that. And after three days of that, film them just looking. That could be nice.

The exhibits are pretty amazing. Some look like 50s drugstore furnishings, shelves and things behind glass. Others are more modern with video explanations of how the dinosaurs became extinct. I saw three little rocks found on the Earth that are from Mars – from a meteor explosion big enough to send rocks off Mars into the earth's gravitation pull. That's just unbelievable. So I'm keeping my eyes open for things.

**NB:** You're about to mark a quarter of a century at CalArts. Are you still benefiting from teaching your Listening and Seeing class?

**JB:** I stopped. For a number of reasons, mainly that there are too many lawyers in the world and the school's nervous. Their solution was a lot of restrictions on what I could do, and things that would make the school not liable but nothing to make me not liable. That pissed me off. I love CalArts, but it's become an institution now, because of the pressure of outside agencies that want to regulate what we do. I don't think any of the art schools in the US have gotten together to fight this interference to regulate the way art is



*Ruhr* (2009)

taught and quantify everything and prove that you're doing this. It's all dumb stuff because it comes from other models and you don't teach art that way. Hopefully the pendulum will swing against it, but it's way too corporate for me.

**NB:** One more question. Your work has been inextricably bound up with America, but your screenings have taken you all across the world. After *Ruhr*, will you ever film again abroad?

**JB:** I made *Ruhr* because that burg [Düsseldorf] reminded me so much of Milwaukee. So even though I made the film in Germany it was really finding things that spoke to my own background.

I didn't think I'd want to travel again because it's hard to fly with equipment, but if I do something here at this museum I might a collaboration and then it would be easier, because two people could carry the equipment. And this is just a surreal place, so it would be interesting to make a surreal film, which I haven't done. But as a reality, because it would be all real, all this stuff... rocks from Mars.

**NB:** A sci-fact film?

**JB:** Yeah. All right, I quit.

**i** DVD editions of *American Dreams and Landscape Suicide*, *RR* and casting a glance and the California Trilogy are available from [filmmuseum.at](http://filmmuseum.at). A fourth release, of *Deseret* and *Four Corners*, is scheduled for later this year.



Sharon Lockhart, a long-form fellow traveller, in Benning's Warhol tribute *20 Cigarettes* (2011)

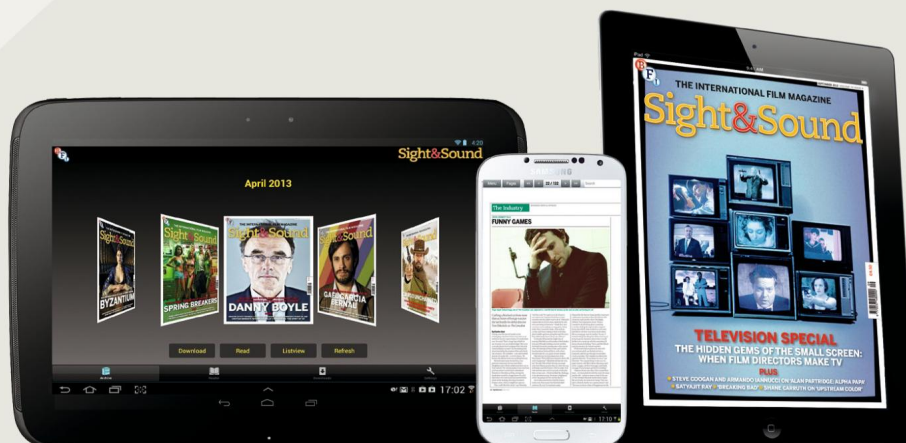




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PREVIEW

## PLAYING BY HIS OWN RULES

Admired by the likes of Tarantino, Spielberg and Jodorowsky, cult German director Roland Klick's reputation continues to grow

By Olaf Möller

The story goes something like this: West German filmmaker Roland Klick's second full-length feature, *Deadlock* (1970), had been invited to compete in Cannes, which was not such a surprise considering that Klick's early shorts had already been noticed by some factions of France's film-critical establishment. Yet certain parties of some importance and consequence in the Federal Republic of Germany had a problem with that request, as they considered this existentialist gangster-Western/desert Kammerspiel/pulp endgame unrepresentative of Young German Cinema. They thought Peter Lilienthal should get a shot at the big time; his heavy-handed message movie *Malatesta* (1970) was obviously deemed more in sync with the unwritten party line. And so it went.

That *Deadlock* finally was shown on the Croisette, albeit *hors* everything official, didn't matter from an image-politics point of view. Cannes 1970 was designed and destined to be

the big breakthrough showcase for the budding *Filmwunder*; and that shouldn't look visceral, gripping, delirious and defiantly popular, like Klick, but original, serious and brainy, like Huillet & Straub, Schroeter, Kristl, Herzog et al, all of whom had new films there. Note the accidental allegoric dimension: *Deadlock* is a tale of gangsters cutting each other's throats over a lot of money...

Difficult to say whether or how things would have developed differently if something so ballsy, a feat and feast of pure cinematographic motion and emotion, had in fact been the face and shape of FRG cinema at what was indeed a decisive moment – whether it would have encouraged others to follow Klick on that path, or whether it would have been considered just an exception, an auteurist stunt. *Deadlock* was unlike anything around in Europe at that time: half Almería-style gunslinger extravaganza and half underground movie, its opening alone – a wounded Mr. Cool in a white suit stumbles through a sea of sand with a gun and an aluminium suitcase – spelled d.i.f.f.e.r.e.n.t. Truth is, there is still nothing like *Deadlock*; no other director has been able to replicate that film's fine balance between laid-back genre pragmatism and pure pop power, between a stylish entertainment made for mass consumption that plays with stereotypes known to all and a rock-happy piece of avant-garde cinema. Try to

imagine an early Philippe Garrel film directed by a genre-transformer like Giulio Questi and you get somewhere in the vicinity of *Deadlock*.

All that said, it's not as if *Deadlock* was a total UFO in FRG cinema. In fact, it represented a radicalisation of aesthetic tendencies exemplified by the variations on film noir made, for instance, by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (*Liebe ist kälter als der Tod/Love Is Colder Than Death*, 1969; *Götter der Pest/Gods of the Plague*, 1970) or Wim Wenders (*Summer in the City (Dedicated to the Kinks)*, 1970) – a cinema based on reading *Cahiers du Cinéma* like the Good Book, watching *A bout de souffle* (1960) on a daily basis and dreaming of having something like that with which to crush the culturally petrified FRG. As the one and only Klaus Lemke, whose *48 Stunden bis Acapulco (48 Hours to Acapulco)*, 1967) is one of the key works in that vein, memorably put it: "For us, these were documentaries about how life really is". Needless to say, these works were usually trashed by the country's film-critical moral majority, who judged them too frivolous and foreign, a dead-end.

*The way Klick sees it, his career was but a chain of disappointments, disenchantments and defeats*



Doomed to failure: Roland Klick



In contrast to the rest, Klick tried to find a place in the mainstream, make films you could show in one of those 70s proto-multiplexes, get the old-school producers to fork out money for his projects. He even ventured into all-out commercial territory: his most underrated work, the melancholic Cold War espionage melodrama *Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein* (Berlin: Violent City, 1976), is based on the novel by Johannes Mario Simmel, whose writings were adapted *en chaîne* during the early and mid-70s, usually by genius hack Alfred Vohrer. That was beyond the pale for his generation. Like his characters, Klick took the storm over that one in his stride: the way he sees it, his career was but a chain of disappointments, disenchantments and defeats anyway. Looking backwards, he was doomed to become a glorified, multi-Bundesfilmpreise-winning failure: the grandmaster of a cinema culture that – as the Cannes 1970 affair and the Simmel experience showed – was not supposed to exist.

And things got worse over what was supposed to be his biggest film ever: *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (Christiane F., 1981). The autobiographical exposé was a monster bestseller back in the day, its movie adaptation the most prestigious job around. Klick looked like the perfect choice, based on his first feature, *Bübchen* (Little Vampire, 1968) – a haunting study of a working-class dad's love for his little son who, out of boredom, has murdered an even younger girl – as well as *Supermarkt* (Supermarket, 1974), the fast-moving story of a teenager caught in a downward spiral of crime. As these exemplary exercises in realism with suspense and thrills about underage victims of FRG life show, Klick would have known how to tell a story of teenage drug abuse, prostitution and solidarity among outsiders in a fashion that made for gripping entertainment with a social conscience. Instead, he either threw in the towel, tired of the back-and-forth between writer Christiane F., producer Bernd Eichinger and himself, or he got fired by an Eichinger hell-bent on making the big time. The former is the way it usually told, the latter looks more likely, the truth is probably a messy mix of both. Uli Edel, a nobody at that point, got hired to do the job. *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* became an often censored, worldwide *succès de scandale* that made Eichinger millions and started his rise to power. The finished film is probably the opposite of what Klick envisioned: his art is about carefully choosing and arranging telling details, while Eichinger-Edel's idea of realism is piling up as many details as possible in the vain hope that some capital-T truth will reveal itself.

Klick's next project, *White Star* (1983), turned into a beast of rage, spite and despair running on empty; this gloriously indigestible piece of work about a wimpy crooner and his crazy manager caught in the battle between punk and new wave was a strictly therapeutic measure, an act of tabula rasa bravado by a man who sensed that he had nothing to lose and gave himself licence to shoot his testament in as freewheeling, spur-of-the-moment a manner as he damn well pleased. The stories of havoc breaking loose on the set are legion; Dennis Hopper's coke benders, for example, and how they supposedly wrecked the film. Klick's last feature to date, the wilfully



Running on empty: *White Star*

zany comedy *Schluckauf* (1989), is an essentially posthumous affair that vanished after one or two screenings for some legal reasons and never got properly released. More recently, it has become kind-of available due to a TV-outing at some ungodly hour but what does that matter if nobody ever looks at it with curiosity and care?

Today, the only Klick films ever cited, revived and revered are *Deadlock* and *Supermarkt*; the rest is silence, which is all the better for the myth Klick has by now become, and not without his complicity. But the privileging of that double-pack of pure genius projects a distorted, less interesting picture of Klick than he deserves. The formalist elements of *Deadlock* and its genre-or-bust attitude – images of dusty desperadoes in a vastness of heat and stones, sweating, fighting, dying to the psychedelic sounds of Cologne's finest, Can – reinforce the sensational aspects of *Supermarkt*, its restlessness and directorial bravura, somewhat to the detriment of its socially conscious aspects. Just look at the first scene of *Supermarkt*, in which protagonist Willi steals a glance at the mirror hanging over a grimy pub bathroom sink where he cleans his mangled body, then turns around and snatches some loose change plus a few sugar cubes – this is as pitiful as it gets in a filthy rich country. *Supermarkt* is chock-full of moments like this. There's dignity in despair for Willi, and a deep sense of disgust with all those well-meaning bourgeois do-gooders who give him everything he doesn't need but

not those few basic things that would change his life for the better. Klick understands how a small-time crook can turn into a criminal, how someone always on the run – and Willi seems to be moving constantly, restless even while sitting still – might hit a wall at some point.

*Bübchen* and *Supermarkt* are among the most precise portrayals of proletarian and lower-middle-class life in the Bonn Republic: the colours of the wallpapers and carpets, the cuts of the shirts and skirts, the 50s furniture, the whiff of cheap cigarettes, supermarket cheese and backyard-grown cabbage and cucumbers; the newly-found cockiness of twenty- and thirtysomething women and the men's fragile playfulness; how that blatant sense of poverty only recently overcome (or not) existed side by side with the modest wealth the economic boom earned its workforce; and the sense of what a dour place of brick and black dust, self-negation and sorrow the FRG was in those days. The hard-edged yet tender, glowing against the gloom faces of the one and only Sieghardt Rupp (*Bübchen*), Charly Wierzejewski (*Supermarkt*) or Heinz Domez (*Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein*) tell it all; and so does the eerily childlike yet wise-beyond-her-age presence of Mascha Rabben, who walks like an alien from planet Leopoldstraße through *Deadlock*, as well as the warily sensual Eva Mattes in *Supermarkt*. And it doesn't stop in the 80s. For all its spasmodic apocalyptic madness, *White Star* still manages to draw a pretty accurate picture of the local No Future alternative state of mind, how the underground looked and the squatters lived.

If one looked for a self-portrait in the films of Roland Klick, one might find it in one of the unlikeliest places: *Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein*. Bruno, the crook who came in from the cold and turned double agent in the West only to find himself torn and finally ripped apart between two states called Germany – that might be him. Because Bruno wants to play the game by his own rules. 📍

**i** Roland Klick retrospectives will screen at the Cambridge Film Festival from 19 to 29 September, and at the Goethe-Institut, London from 19 September to 9 October



Hors everything official: *Deadlock*

## GLITTER AND MAGICK

The potency of Kenneth Anger's nine-part 'Magick Lantern Cycle' is as much down to its bewitching soundtrack as its delirious images

By Charlie Fox

The nine parts of Kenneth Anger's *Magick Lantern Cycle* (1947-81) look like scattered footage, difficult to date, from some drug-blitzed Halloween party shot in a Hollywood studio. For Anger, cinema has always involved a delirious commingling of glamour and witchcraft, ever since his childhood appearance as the Changeling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935). He's the chronicler of *Hollywood Babylon* and longtime practitioner of Thelema, the libertine religion unveiled to British occultist and 'wickedest man in the world' Aleister Crowley during a vision in 1904. (The combination isn't as strange as it seems: 'glamour' comes from the same root as grimoire and originally means a spell or enchantment.) The *Cycle*'s a haunting fugue on these twin obsessions; you can loop it all night like a new, intoxicating record.

Each part is an outline of a genre yet to be explored, like the Gothic one-reeler, a re-enactment of a spooky folktale or car-fetish flick. For all their nonpareil strangeness, these are works anchored in a simple conceit about the persistence of myth into modern life. The thrust of *Scorpio Rising* is its best illustration: boys on motorbikes, the latest incarnations of Lucifer, devilish and madly desirable. Though it took more than 20 years to make, time passes in secret, detectable only in the slow creep of psychedelia into the later pieces, like LSD mixing with the witch's brew. This eerie feel of stopped time is intensified by the grand artifice of the performances, which belong to a looking-glass film history in which the era of silent film never ended; everyone in Anger's work is struck dumb.

Music is crucial in this mute dream-work: it sets the tempo and the tone; it binds the spell. A certain kind of idle critique describes Anger as the inventor of the music video but that's too brittle, too familiar a term for his way with song and montage, and also forgets Fred and Ginger, *Entr'acte*, or Disney's *Skeleton Dance* (his oeuvre bears marks of enchantment by all). They're not so much music videos as eerie riddles that demand to be parsed yet remain impossible to figure out. You can turn strange in pursuit of this work that contains so much: Satanic talk, homoerotic snapshots, countercultural history, cavorting devils, pirated celebrity appearances (Brando scowling in *The Wild One*), hallucinations, Hollywood junk and sophisticated parodies. *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954) is a vade mecum of camp aesthetics—the loudness of the wallpaper!—and may be the only homemade German Expressionist musical, created by someone who mourned the genre's lack of neon. Janacek's *Glagolitic Mass* on the soundtrack is a sacred forest of modernist composition, all pagan recitation and Slavonic liturgy. Anger turns it into music for a party in Hell.

Songs are an unnerving complication for scenes throughout the *Cycle*. *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1965), the interlude-comedown after *Scorpio Rising*, is especially disconcerting. The Paris Sisters murmur, "I want a dream



Not what you'd call stately: *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*

lover / So I don't have to dream alone..." A boy gazes at the lustrous body of his hot rod. What weird desires are mid-swoon here?

*Rabbit's Moon* (1950) starts in total darkness with a sound that spooks me out of my skin, an ethnographic recording of a little girl performing a strange ululation, letting her larynx flutter with something that's simultaneously sorrow and longing. It's made eerier still by a certain echo: she sounds just like Crowley on a record from the 1920s in which he invokes spirits in Enochian, the "language" of angels. Odd correspondences like that abound, accidental or not, and part of the *Cycle*'s enchantment seems to be inducing a kind of critical mania where *everything* is meaningful. There comes a feeling of being lost in the funhouse, listening carefully for things not quite there.

Anger is erudite and allusive but he's also a deeply mischievous filmmaker, fond of symbolism as subtle as the sparkler coming out of the sailor's crotch in *Fireworks* (1947). *Eaux d'artifice* (1953) makes puckish use of Vivaldi's baroque-kitsch "Winter" from *The Four Seasons*. Its giddy strings rush over slow-motion shots of the fountains



Beyond our Ken: *Rabbit's Moon*

*These strange, nonpareil works are anchored in a simple conceit about the persistence of myth into modern life*

at Tivoli to make a disco-montage of sprayed champagne and spurting cum that a Moroder pulse lives for. No gifted interpreter of lyrics, always drawn like a sleepwalker towards the same attractions (talk of moons, devils, angels that chimes with pagan symbolism), he plays call-and-response with their words, so *Rabbit's Moon* contains Pierrot the clown waking and the Capris yelping like lovesick wolves, "There's a moon out tonight... But the pairing of a love-song with such peculiar tableaux totally bypasses language for its deepest effect. Listening in Anger's enchanted woodland, you're reminded how *odd* doo-wop is: pillow-talk that's crossed over into a dream, voices meeting and drifting apart in a haunted room. Pierrot's heart is broken, the devil absconds with his nymph and you're left as eavesdropper



Petal power: *Invocation of My Demon Brother*



## PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA



A unique programming venture at Bologna's Il Cinema Ritrovato festival tunes the viewer into life 100 years ago

and voyeur on two melancholy worlds.

*Scorpio Rising* (1963) is a long wolf-whistle at Death and a hymn about teenage flesh. Bikers' bodies are coupled with smouldering love-songs from the late 50s. An entire iconography begins here on film and stretches back through the pages of *The Thief's Journal* towards Ancient Greece: the gay male not as effete flaming creature but gorgeous thug. Homoeroticism always lived between the lines of songs or achieved oblique expression through the emotional extremities reached by opera divas: their 'grandiosity', according to the cultural critic Wayne Koestenbaum, is always "a wild compensation for the [male] listener's silence", the silence caused by an unspeakable sexuality. Anger belongs to this tradition of elliptical confession, calling on torrid Motown 45s and doe-eyed girls from Phil Spector records to speak for him: "Whenever I'm with him / Something inside starts to burn!" Songs talk about desires in artful ways that ordinary conversation cannot, especially in times straitened by censorship. Most of its soundtrack is girls singing about boys ('My Boyfriend's Back' by the Angels, 'Leader of The Pack' by the Shangri-Las, and plenty more); as counterpoint to its exclusively male cast, they sound like feverish expressions of gay longing, a veiled code for where desire lies. From end to end ('Fools Rush In' to wailing siren), sound is used to deliver a kind of depraved excitement, like huffing glue out of a paper bag: 'Heatwave' blasts out over flashes of Brando, hysterical cackling comes when a cartoon Jesus appears on a skull, a wounded Elvis pines on 'Devil in Disguise' (sung to slinking black cats), all set to a montage of trash from a B-movie version of America – comic books, Lucky Strikes, Dracula and motorcycle crashes. The energies of the records (mania, lust, electricity) are transferred into the film, as if they were keeping each other alive.

*Invocation of My Demon-Brother* (1968) records the inevitable burnout: psychedelic California in the process of disintegration, fried by too many drugs, waiting for Charles Manson to arrive. (Its most potent symbol is Bobby Beausoleil, who appears nude, angelic, and would soon participate in the Manson family murders.) Mick Jagger supplies the abrasive, insistent Moog score, a proto-Industrial lock-groove that takes on an incantatory effect: this is a film meant to induce a trance.

From prison, Beausoleil recorded the half-sublime, half-ridiculous music for *Lucifer Rising*, a kind of acid-kitsch hymn shot in sites of magickal significance from Giza through German forest to Stonehenge. Often it looks like a test-reel for a sequel to *Performance* (1970) in which Jagger and his lovers live out their orientalist fantasies. The cast is a set of near-doubles: Marianne Faithfull wanders, strung-out, catlike, through ruins in place of Anita Pallenberg, who instead takes the shadowy role of producer; Chris Jagger appears in silhouette as his brother dropped out, too spooked by his dabbings in magick to participate; and writer-director Donald Cammell performs a ritual dressed as Osiris. A hypnotic, lava-like flow of amorphous noise moves from rock bombast through a solo on a kind of space-age ice-rink organ into a demented echo of German kosmische Musik. This is its climax, magick and cinema bound together. Notes die out, darkness falls, the cycle starts again. ☸

**By Bryony Dixon**

In 2003, the Cinema Ritrovato festival in Bologna embarked on a programme of films from 100 years ago. Curated by the talented multilingual film historian Mariann Lewinsky, this 10-year-old strand has proved one of the most exciting and innovative approaches to programming in my festival-going experience. It started as a catch-all sidebar for early film but quickly became a festival within a festival and began to attract the attention of Bologna regulars and heavyweight historians because it was incredibly useful. It allowed the viewer to attain the kind of broad knowledge, year by year, that only archivists and paid researchers usually get to acquire. It drew in films from around the world, prompting archivists to (politely) compete for inclusion, as well as offering the rare opportunity to make connections between films from different nations.

As Lewinsky explains in this year's catalogue, the 'cento anni fa' strand was conceived as "an interpretation of that one year's production, and to display some of its characteristic aspects, for the programmes are like the display cabinets of an exhibition". A programmer's dream, it allowed for playful juxtapositions and thematic focus; fairy films, microscopic films, comedy suffragettes, films about food, or natural disasters, or electricity, as well as fascinating documentation of the development of other subgenres. With the curator acting as "a travel agency, organising excursions into the past", the strand was also fantastically entertaining, because the films were all short - if you didn't like one, there would be another along in a minute.

But what would happen when we reached 1913-14? The great watershed, the end of the long 19<sup>th</sup> century and the time of the great change in the cinema – the advent of the feature film, successor to the vibrant assortment of shorts that characterised the first decade. In 2003 you could put on, more or less, the entire surviving output of the film industry; a centenary programme representing a good cross-section of a year's production after 1913 would no longer be practical. Well, here we are, and it's an interesting moment to reflect on anniversary programming, '100 years ago' as a moment in film history and the year 1913 itself.

Film is an "incomparable medium", as Ritrovato's catalogue puts it, for registering the past in our minds. "Momentous historical events like wars or the birth and death of important persons are stored away in our collective memory and marked by regular commemoration days." Media obsession

*In 2003 you could put on, more or less, the entire surviving output of the film industry 100 years ago*



Beach party: *David Copperfield*

with centenaries is apparently nothing new – the films of 1913 include commemorations of the centenary of the Battle of Leipzig and the tercentenary of Romanov rule in Russia. The latter event appeared both as news and in docudrama form. The big movie news of 1913 was, of course, a blockbuster from Italy, the long feature *Quo Vadis?*, proving to the industry, once and for all, that heavy investment in a film property was sustainable. The film became a model of the genre characterised by "lavish sets, thousands of extras, the management of vast locations, the spectacular nature of the action". In Britain, the first features likewise banked on classics, starting with *Oliver Twist* in 1912 and continuing in 1913 with *David Copperfield*, *East Lynne* and *The Battle of Waterloo* (any tendency to grandeur in these was immediately lampooned by the film comedian Fred Evans's Pimple persona).

The hour-long dramatic feature and occasional documentary aside, pre-existing formats were remarkably resilient: the one-minute news item, the 10-minute special-interest film, the single-reeler comedy. 1913 also continued to produce short dramas, the best of which Lewinsky calls "narrative perfection in one reel". Master of this form was Allan Dwan, whose retrospective at this year's festival showcased that skill (see report S&S Sept 2013). My favourite Dwan, *Man's Calling* (1912), is an aesthetic gem concerning the dilemma faced by a man renouncing his father's ambitions for him to become a monk, condensed more emotion and complexity into 15 minutes than many a 90-minute feature.

As we head for the mother of all anniversaries next year, I hope it's not entirely the end of an era for the centenary programme; let's hope we can continue to look at all the diverse shorter films from a hundred years ago as well as tracing the development of directors and the feature film. This year, it's good to pause on the threshold, to see 1913 through its films, not as a staging point in the build-up to war but as the people of 1913 saw it, and to look back from there to the joyful youth of cinema – inventive, fluid, full of ideas and dreams of the future. ☸

# WEIRD SISTERS



Things fall apart: Lolcats by prizewinning artist Rachel Maclean

Three women artists, all based in Scotland, make videos that offer warped, hilarious parodies of contemporary culture

**By John Beagles**

Sometimes it's difficult not to feel overwhelmingly dirty. There you sit, watching *How to Look 10 Years Younger* or yet another advert for the fake philanthropy of *The Secret Millionaire*, fascinated disgust having overtaken you in a moment of weakness, trying to shake the feeling that the future-fascist TV cutaway scenes of Paul Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers* (1997) were the most prophetic moments of celluloid of the last 30 years. If Freudian disavowal once protected the psyche from the troubling pangs of illegitimate desire, today it works hard to deny the presence of this propaganda. Faced with the decadence of Babylon, artists aren't immune to self-serving careerist denial, the list of those carrying out business as usual long and litigious.

Fortunately, disavowal isn't a feature of the films of Scotland-based artists Erica Eyres, Michelle Hannah and Rachel Maclean. Working primarily with the moving image, all three revel in channelling the drives, appetites and desires of the zeitgeist. While much contemporary

work appears as if it could have been made 20 years ago, their practices are cornucopias of the demons colonising our synapses today. One suspects all three possess an insatiable appetite for trawling network spaces for the weird, the wild and the banal. Certainly, their work is replete with the grotesque ciphers of today's corporate-trash-consumerism and ghostly apparitions from popular cultures past.

A Canadian by birth, Erica Eyres first came to prominence with a series of grimly hilarious videos such as *Destiny Green* and *Baby Marleena*. The former is the darkly gothic, hyperbolic tale of a beauty-pageant queen whose obsession with the symmetrical perfection prized by celebrity culture leads her to have her nose, eyes and mouth surgically removed, in the quest for the 'ideal' face (*Eyes Without a Face* to the power of ten). In the film, Eyres inhabits a succession of grotesques – the pushy mother, the self-loathing sister – who trade in the banalities of daytime TV. Eyres displayed an engrossing, entertaining facility for character mimicry, her skill at inhabiting these 'creatures' undoubtedly the result of watching a punishing schedule of Channel 4 and 5 documentaries; an endless loop of body and mental horror. Comparably, the rationalisation for *Destiny's* radical surgery – "it's her body, her decision" – echoes such shows' familiar empty rhetoric of ersatz self-empowerment and choice.

These shows present the most extreme signs of what are actually widespread pathologies, created by what the writers Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello sardonically termed "the new spirit of capitalism". This is a world where compulsive disorders, neuroses and schizophrenia are legion. It's these psychological pathogens that percolate through Eyres work. The combined effect of her amateurish, lo-fi production (reminiscent of American public access television), often pitch-perfect characterisation and over-the-top storytelling is a darkly comic act of displacement. The nervous, awkward laughter *Destiny* generates is reminiscent of the philosopher Simon Critchley's description of Samuel Beckett's humour as "the laugh that laughs at the laugh". Eyres's upside-down parade of grotesques is, to borrow Umberto Eco's phrase, "a cold carnival".

This kind of awkwardness is most pronounced in Eyres's recent film *Pam's Dream*. In this work, Eyres stages a re-enactment of the notorious episode of *Dallas* in which a whole season is revealed to have been nothing more than a dream, but using a cast of young children. Dolled-up in fake wigs, big daft hats and shoulder pads, the distancing effect of the children's parroting of *Dallas's* dog-eat-dog sensibility is simultaneously absurd, troubling and deflationary. The work's political dimension, the knowledge that *Dallas* was the advance battalion for neoliberalism's



cultural colonisation of British TV, renders the result as sick and lucid as an episode of Channel 4's perversely sexualised child pop re-enactment show *Minipops*. However, the children's performances in *Pam's Dream* counterbalance the horror with a deflationary power. This kind of slick, fantasy capitalism, as *The Apprentice* shows us every week, is fundamentally silly; not taking it 'seriously' is, as the kids inadvertently remind us, political.

Michelle Hannah is an apocalyptic gothic medium, an intermediary between our decaying world of ossifying culture and an earlier, vital one. In a series of videos and performances, she has demonstrated a fearless ability to produce intense moments of hallucinatory displacement. Fundamental to her work has been Hannah's use of ambient, electronic drone sounds and vocal digital processing. The theorist Michel Chion has charted how sound in cinema has shifted from a secondary role of 'added value' to a more potent, primary carrier of meaning, just as in videos such as *SONNE*, *HOWDOESITFEEL* and *BLACKHOLESUN*. It is Hannah's use of sound, perhaps most memorably in the mesmerising video *ICARUS*, that creates affective dissonance and, perhaps most importantly, a simultaneous kind of romantic reverie.

While Eyres, with whom Hannah has collaborated, often inhabits multiple grotesque personae, Hannah's androgynous alter ego, with its dead-shark eyes and black cocktail dress, appears as a mutant pop diva, the bastard offspring of David Bowie and Grace Jones. She has referred to this character as a dystopian self; certainly, the impression is of a kind of Lynchian bruised cabaret act from the other side. Her slow, seemingly trancelike movements ghostly, her facial expression robotically frozen, she exists as an otherworldly pop shaman, divining on our behalf, communing with the demons, existing in a slowly pulsing half-light.

The audiovisual space Hannah creates in videos such as her reworking of the Smiths track 'How Soon is Now' in *SONNE* is troubled and troubling. Filmed in close-up, Hannah's head and body appear possessed by the spirits, her digitally manipulated voice processing Morrissey's angst into an ethereal, almost ritualistic intonation. The digital processing yields a warped vocal duality, partly robotic, partly animalistic. It is intensely affecting and haunting. Deeply uncanny, it comes from somewhere else, and might indeed take us to somewhere else. Like Eyres's grotesque parody, Hannah's reworking of old songs defamiliarises and reanimates. These are covers evacuated of fawning respect and banal nostalgia. Instead, Hannah's reimaginings, like her mongrel personae, are capable of producing new, disquieting ruptures in the now, reminding us of what's been lost in the figure of today's pop star – namely, the possibility of transformative liberation from the vicissitudes of the everyday, something absent in the dull thud of today's largely instrumental, bleached-out culture.

In a recent edition of *e-flux*, artists and writers discussed the concept of accelerationism. Steven Shaviro offers this definition: "by pushing capitalism's own internal tensions (or what Marx called its contradictions) to extremes,



Medium cool: Michelle Hannah in *HOWDOESITFEEL*

accelerationism hopes to reach a point where capitalism explodes and falls apart". There's more than a hint of an accelerationist strategy at play in Rachel Maclean's hyper-saturated, warped inversion of now. The recipient of the 2013 Margaret Tait award, Maclean stitches together a hallucinatory mash-up of cultural artefacts from our collective past and atomised present in videos such as *Over the Rainbow*, *Lolcats* and *Germes*. In this kaleidoscopic universe of acid-baroque *mises en scène*, Maclean inhabits a Bosch-like menagerie of grotesques, flipping between a decadently attired foppish chimera mouthing the words of Katy Perry and a blue-faced, bar-coded slave speaking lines from *Snow White*.


Formally and technically, the level of ambition in Maclean's work is (by the admittedly low standards of much contemporary art) refreshing and startling. Designing and fabricating all her own costumes (Bollywood does Bosch does Bowery and Westwood), as well as shooting over lengthy periods (*Lolcats* took a year), allows Maclean to endow her intricate, deeply ambitious works with a unique formal and visual complexity.

*This kind of slick, fantasy capitalism is fundamentally silly; not taking it 'seriously' is, the kids remind us, political*



Not so stellar Dallas: Erica Eyres's *Pam's Dream*

Superficially, the aesthetic of her fully realised, green-screened, composite worlds is equal parts 80s pop video, 90s computer game and kids' TV show. First viewing suggests a corporate utopian theme park adorned throughout with adulterated Starbucks logos. While distinctions between past and future, human and animal are volatile and mutable in Maclean's films, the narratives of *Lolcats* and *Over the Rainbow* begin in a space where a veneer of consensual contentment pervades. Floppy-eared bunnies offer cutesy invitations: "Hi! I'm Fluffy. We could have lots of fun together." This is clearly the familiar infantilised fantasy of a utopia uncontaminated by violence and poverty. However, beneath the placid veneer, this is an infected space, and the narratives quickly turn death-dark black: mincemeat flesh spills from fluffy fun-fur bodies and benignly smiling, saccharine princesses start snarling with fascistic malevolence. Just as the robots turned in *Westworld* and the beast-men rebelled in *Island of Lost Souls* ("Law no more!"), so the surface homogeneity rapidly dissolves. At times, the expression of all this is grimly hilarious: when replayed by one of Maclean's nightmarish chimeras, Prince William's suggestion that he and Kate are "like sort of ducks, very calm on the surface with little feet going under the water" becomes positively ghoulish. Entertaining, 'accelerated', razor-sharp allegory and parody rarely gets any better than this in the art world.

Eyres, Hannah and Maclean all trade in material that places them in some aesthetic and critical jeopardy. Their refusal to wear their cleverness on their sleeves through knowing quotation or via the now rather mannerist litany of self-reflexive nods and winks constitutes a potential handicap to being read as producers of serious, 'critical' video art. I suspect they don't care. All three have produced highly distinctive works that possess an aesthetic, cognitive and emotional intensity deliriously at odds with the often desiccated anaemia of much academic video art. They've created their own worlds, populated with their own imaginings, which are potentially far richer in generating ideas about how we might fashion an escape from this garden of earthly delights. 

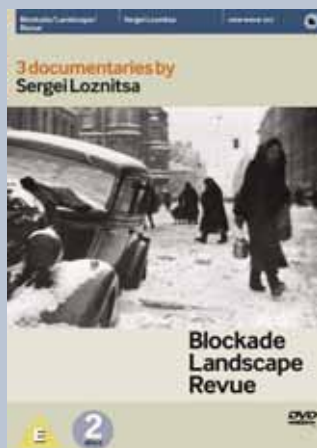
# new wave films on DVD



## In the Fog

Sergei Loznitsa's FIPRESCI winner got 5 star reviews for its Tolstoyan depiction of moral dilemmas during the 2nd World War in Belarus. The disc also includes his short film, *Letter*.

**DVD and Blu-ray release**  
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## Blockade/Landscape/Revue

These 3 documentaries by Loznitsa are released together for the first time. *Blockade* deals with the siege of Leningrad, *Revue* re-fashions Soviet news-reels, and *Landscape* from 2003 eavesdrops on conversations at a small town Russian bus-stop.

**DVD release 23 September**



## Caesar Must Die

The Taviani Brothers' Berlin Golden Bear winner takes the performance of Julius Caesar by the inmates of a Roman high-security prison to examine the dynamics of power and the relation between art and life to moving effect.

**DVD release 28 October**



## Like Someone in Love

Abbas Kiarostami's latest, set in Tokyo, takes identities assumed and mistaken for a complex but light-touched film on the relation between a student, an old professor and her jealous boyfriend.

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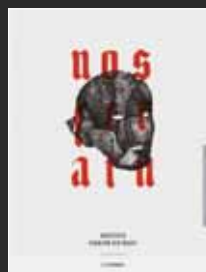
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# Reviews



## 90 **The To Do List**

*Sex in the virgin imagination resembles fantasies of a distant land that one has never seen but only heard described; in the hysteria and delusion occasioned by the bugbear of 'losing it' lie the makings of the great American teen-sex comedy*



**60 Films of the month**



**68 Films**



**94 Home Cinema**



**104 Books**



Bitter dregs: Cate Blanchett

## Blue Jasmine

USA 2013

Director: Woody Allen

### Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Woody Allen's *Blue Jasmine* begins with a plane's ascent, and a comedown. On board, a well-turned-out if brittle and over-talkative fortysomething woman, Jasmine (Cate Blanchett), recounts the story of her perfect marriage to a masculine paragon named Hal, who Once Upon a Time seduced her to the tune of 'Blue Moon', pulled her out of Boston University and put her on a pedestal. Hal's gone now, and Jasmine is coming to San Francisco to start a new life. She tells this to an older woman in the adjacent seat; the intimacy is such that we assume the woman is Jasmine's travelling companion, perhaps in her employ – although when they reach the luggage carousel it's evident that the woman was a complete stranger, a captive audience seized upon by the needy, nattering Jasmine. On the ground, the woman escapes to her rendezvous with relief: "She couldn't stop babbling about her life."

When Jasmine shows up on her sister's doorstep in San Francisco's more ragged precincts, her genteel pretensions are betrayed. Such dislocations between representation and reality put a viewer on guard about Allen's heroine. When, in the first of the flashbacks that stripe

the narrative, you see Jasmine and Hal (Alec Baldwin) in happier times, him presenting her with a new home, you brace for another rug-pull. Baldwin plays the scene a bit too broadly, and there's a sense that something's off here. Is this the elaborate fantasy of an overactive, neurotic imagination? Was there ever a Hal? Did this ever really happen at all?

Well, yes and no. There *were* beautiful houses, French wallpaper and summers on the Long Island Sound, and those honeyed words were said

– but they were lies, and the houses were made of cards, paid for through Hal's Bernie Madoff-like Ponzi scheme, finally exposed. Installed with sister Ginger and fuelled by Xanax, Stoli martinis and boundless self-pity, Jasmine describes her social descent. The bright, sparrow-like openness of sister Ginger, played by Sally Hawkins, contrasts with Blanchett's permanent WASP recoil – the way she makes having to "take a place in Brooklyn" sound tantamount to purgatory.

The reference is a little dated. While the



In every dream home: Cate Blanchett, Alec Baldwin, Andrew Dice Clay, Sally Hawkins



## Blanchett's permanent WASP recoil shows up in the way she makes having to "take a place in Brooklyn" sound tantamount to purgatory

a balancing act of keeping up appearances, recently played Blanche DuBois in a well-received production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* in New York and Sydney, directed by Liv Ullmann, one-time collaborator and muse of Allen's venerated idol Ingmar Bergman.

This is Allen's first Williams cover, though he has 'done' Bergman several times, beginning with 1978's *Interiors*, in which Geraldine Page, another Williams belle, became unhinged upon separation from her husband. Allen has 'done' Fellini, too, and *Blue Jasmine's* case-study flashbacks, matching the rise and fall of Jasmine's marriage to the slow, inevitable recurrence of breakdown, are certainly a hallmark of that psychoanalysis-influenced arthouse generation. It's handled rather deftly – though the fact of Hal's suicide, while explaining Jasmine's insuperable burden of guilt, strikes a false note: it's impossible to imagine Baldwin's preening egotist actually doing himself harm.

Allen is too often content to settle for sketch rather than detail – a friend once called his films "first-draft cinema" – but there is nevertheless something moving about seeing the director stir himself from his senescent uptown slumber to try to make contact with the contemporary world. Moreover, *Blue Jasmine* brings together the best ensemble of any Allen film in recent memory, eschewing the usual method of pulling up a list of hot actors with a gap in their schedules who "are dying to work with Woody". The redoubtable Michael Stuhlbarg plays a dentist whom Jasmine starts working for, and when he tries to force his attentions on the horrified (and rather taller) Jasmine, the film manages the uneasy combination of tragedy and farce that has lately evaded its director.

The biggest surprise here, even to those of us who remember his work in the Michael Mann-

produced *Crime Story*, is Andrew Dice Clay, a shock-comedy phenom of the late 80s/early 90s. Hair thin and waist thick, Clay embodies the very spirit of trudging middle-aged regret. He plays Augie, Ginger's ex-husband, their marriage busted up when Hal defrauded them of their lottery winnings with the opportunity of one of his "very low-risk but very high-yield" investments. If not for Clay's reproachful presence, a millstone of guilt, *Blue Jasmine* might seem to prefer the rarefied suffering of the deposed aristocracy to that of the mere commoner. As the symbol of a bad that cannot be undone, though, Augie is both a vengeful narrative boomerang and a recognisable man, vivid in his dashed pride.

When Augie and Ginger come into their money, they know, as people who have scrimped and saved all their lives, that it's their one shot. For Jasmine, whose entire previous social existence as we witness it, including her philanthropy, is an elaborate act of differentiating herself from "the less fortunate", it's inconceivable that the same rules apply to her. Hal, the *homme fatal* of the piece, says more than once that he likes to "spoil" his wife – and he finally succeeds, in every sense of the word. "Has it occurred to you that you are the less fortunate?" as the line from Whit Stillman's *Metropolitan* goes.

Watching *Blue Jasmine*, the viewer is placed in the position of the old lady on the plane at its opening, strapped in close quarters with maybe the most petty, delusional, narcissistic and abject woman in the 77-year-old Allen's enormous filmography. The not unimpressive feat accomplished by Allen and Blanchett is that, as Jasmine is finally left to continue her "babbling about her life" alone on a park bench, you can't but feel for her. Deceived by the promise of 'Blue Moon', she was taken in like everyone else, and taken for everything; no less than Mia Farrow in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, she fell in love with an illusion, with a lifestyle that was a clapboard set. And while Allen's self-consciously contemporary film stays part-way lodged in the Great Depression, Blanchett's Jasmine gets one real, vital tremor of outrage that's near to an insight: "There's only so many traumas a person can withstand before they take to the streets and start screaming." 

borough, in the popular imagination, remains a haven for working-class bums like *The Honeymooners'* Ralph Kramden, the average rent has reached \$3,000 a month and is climbing. Allen is a Brooklyn boy himself, from humble beginnings – although this was in the years just before the Second World War, and his understanding of the presently beleaguered American working class belongs to this period. Allen associates blue-collar identity with dumb nicknames and boxing matches and brutishly wearing undershirts (see Danny Aiello's Monk in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*). Much of the dialogue here plays like a parody of Clifford Odets – and indeed, Allen parodied the social-realist theatre associated with Odets in 1994's *Bullets over Broadway*. "You're a grease monkey and I'll be bagging groceries all my life!" shrieks Ginger. "She's coo-coo, baby!" returns Chili, her mechanic boyfriend, played by Bobby Cannavale.

While one can forgive the note of stage-speech in the flashback scenes ("Jasmine, your country-house is so beautiful!"), which are meant after all to show a world where appearance is everything, the 30s-vintage proletarian is an odd fit in a movie addressed to very contemporary hard times. When Cannavale is called on to rampage drunkenly through the apartment doing his best bull-in-a-china-shop Brando impression, most viewers will think not of Odets but of Tennessee Williams. The parallel is only strengthened by the fact that Blanchett, tremblingly performing

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Letty Aronson  
Stephen Tenenbaum  
Edward Wilson  
**Written by**  
Woody Allen  
**Director of Photography**  
Javier Aguirresarobe  
**Editor**  
Alisa Lepselter  
**Production Designer**

Santo Loquasto  
**Production Sound Mixer**  
Nelson Stoll  
**Costume Designer**  
Suzy Benzinger

**Production Companies**  
Sony Pictures  
Classics presents  
in association with

Gravier Productions  
a Perdido production  
**Executive Producers**  
Leroy Schecter  
Adam B. Stern

**Cast**  
Alec Baldwin  
Harold 'Hal' Francis  
Cate Blanchett  
Jeanette 'Jasmine'

**Louis C.K.**  
Al  
Bobby Cannavale  
Chili  
Andrew Dice Clay  
Augie  
Sally Hawkins  
Ginger  
Peter Sarsgaard  
Dwight Westlake  
Michael Stuhlbarg  
Dr Flicker

**Tammy Blanchard**  
Jane  
Max Casella  
Eddie  
Alden Ehrenreich  
Danny Francis

**Dolby Digital**  
In Colour  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**

Warner Bros  
Distributors (UK)

San Francisco, the present. Jasmine, a Park Avenue socialite, arrives penniless at her sister Ginger's apartment in one of the city's working-class areas. In flashback we see the pampered life that Jasmine has left behind, and meet her late husband Hal, who was busted for operating a Ponzi scheme. His many victims included Ginger and her ex-husband Augie. In her reduced circumstances, Jasmine begrudgingly interacts with her sister's fiancé Chili, and starts a day job as a dentist's receptionist while taking a night course in computing. A classmate invites Jasmine to a party, which she drags Ginger along to. Fabricating her past and present, Jasmine hooks up with Dwight, a state department employee with political ambitions; Ginger meets businessman

Al. The two relationships develop concurrently. The spurned Chili harasses Ginger; Jasmine and Dwight pick out antiques for his Marin mansion, which they plan to live in together. On the way to choose a wedding ring, however, Jasmine and Dwight run into Augie, who divulges the story of Jasmine's past and reveals that her adopted son, who disappeared after the scandal, is now living nearby. Abandoned by Dwight, Jasmine seeks out her son, who rejects her for having turned Hal in to the authorities as revenge for his infidelities. Jasmine returns to Ginger's apartment to find that Ginger has ditched the philandering Al and reconciled with Chili. Jasmine wanders out of the apartment and is last seen muttering to herself on a park bench.



Out of the ordinary: Antonia Campbell-Hughes

## Kelly + Victor

United Kingdom/Ireland 2012

Director: Kieran Evans

Certificate 18 94m 13s

See Interview  
on page 12

### Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

He tells her "I'm coming up" when they first meet on the dance floor. On the surface, it's an everyday, mutually understood drugs reference

grounding the story among contemporary Merseyside twentysomethings. In the course of the highly charged love story that unfolds between the eponymous Kelly and Victor, however, that phrase comes to mean a whole lot more. Entirely appropriate, too, since the words themselves hint at a secret ocean of meaning – a desire for ecstatic release, for heightened experience taking us out of our quotidian selves. In this sensual, provocative and (yes!) dangerously romantic first fiction feature from Kieran Evans, a distinctive individual yearning for the

transcendent thus flickers within a mundane big-city nightclub and its bodies in motion. What follows, when the mutual attraction between shopgirl Kelly and scrapyard worker Victor is subsequently consummated in her grotty bedsit – played out in a give-and-take of grasping hands, biting teeth and intensified orgasm – is a gateway moment opening up startling new avenues of possibility for both of them.

Done badly, this sort of material could be truly calamitous – *Hollyoaks* meets *Fifty Shades of Grey*, anyone? – so it's a real tribute to Evans's adaptation of Niall Griffiths's 2002 novel that it's the only independent British film feasibly comparable with Oshima Nagisa's *In the Realm of the Senses*, still the acme of serious celluloid exploration of sexuality even if it's getting on for 40 years old. *Kelly + Victor* is tamer, certainly, since the simulated couplings preserve the modesty of co-stars Antonia Campbell-Hughes and Julian Morris with more delicacy than their up-for-anything Japanese forebears, and Morris doesn't submit himself to extremes of strangulation as Fuji Tatsuya did. In essence,

though, both films spring from a similar insight – that the fevered consensual transgressions of domination and submission offer access to the idea of sexuality as a journey beyond one's daily self. In Oshima's film they are a refuge from the increasingly militarised environs of 1930s Japan, here a departure from dysfunctional family life and a post-industrial economy offering scant rewards for ordinary working folk.

That said, it would be misleading to suggest that Evans is placing his passionate lovers in some tract about 'broken Britain'. Yes, the proceedings involve at various moments absent parents, dockyard scrap, black-market drugs and a contentious domestic restraining order, but much of this material has to do with the superficial texture of the characters' lives – and the happenstances of sustaining a feature-length storyline – rather than the essential truths the film ambitiously seeks to explore. The Liverpool that Evans puts on screen is a place where rusting scrap and abandoned buildings denote the impermanence of the urban environment, an impermanence made even more apparent by the



city's proximity to the surrounding countryside and its coastal location, so that we're reminded of the uncertainty of human endeavours by the constancy of nature in view. Merseyside stands as a collision point between the now and the eternal, the very same collision enacted in the sweat and transcendence of the lovers' fevered encounters.

Without seeing the film, you'd be forgiven for wondering if these high-falutin' associations perhaps exist mainly in the mind of an overzealous reviewer. Key to Evans's achievement, however – and what makes him potentially the most exciting British filmmaker to emerge in the wake of Lynne Ramsay, Steve McQueen and Andrea Arnold – is that these ideas aren't just talked about in *Kelly + Victor*; they're manifested on screen in a thought-through visual language. A story thread that has Victor's laddish friends buying drugs from a supplier in a quiet rural hideaway, for instance, cuts back and forth to Kelly under strip-lighting in a garage, watching her part-time dominatrix pal whipping a submissive, self-loathing banker. Time and again, Evans and editor Tony Kearns play enclosing urban environments against the freedom of open natural spaces. We see striking frontal compositions of streets, tunnels and bridges thrusting deep within the frame, hemming in the characters' movement to a narrow strip of road or pavement – in complete contrast to the sea views on the horizon, or even the wide-angle vistas across the lake in Sefton Park. There is an ongoing association between nature and escape: at the height of sexual ecstasy, Victor visualises the idea of transcendence as sunlight breaking through trees, and subsequently seeks to communicate this sense of longing to Kelly via a mix-CD song – Viking Moses's sweetly doom-laden waltz 'Dancing by the Water Day' – that equates drowning and beatific calm.

It was a criticism of Niall Griffiths's source

*Campbell-Hughes is striking in the way her performance integrates demure shopgirl ordinariness with scary psycho-pixie threat*

novel, which narrated its events from Victor's and then Kelly's perspective, that it was more successful in conveying his inner world than hers. That pattern is repeated to some degree here, where the notion that her dominant sexuality awakens dark yearnings in him proves more succinctly readable than the rather vaguer origins (paternal abandonment, a previous abusive boyfriend) of her need to strangle and cut her lover. While Morris wisely refuses to overplay Victor's anxiety and helplessness in the face of his submissive needs, the petite Campbell-Hughes is, if anything, even more striking in the way her performance integrates demure shopgirl ordinariness with scary psycho-pixie threat when Kelly gets carried away by her controlling desires. It'll be interesting to see what filmmakers do with her unique screen presence, since she brings to vivid life a slightly underwritten role. Typically, though, Evans sometimes does better with pictures than script, since the banter with the secondary array of friends and relatives comes across as slightly anodyne. In the end it's not what Kelly says that helps us fathom her more fully, but Evans's striking visual transition from her fascination with a Victorian sculpture immortalising two lovers in marble to the reveal that she's carved 'K+V' into her bound and less-than-willing partner's back. Put like that, Kelly's anxious need to circumvent self-esteem issues and leave a lasting mark on the world now makes more sense.

The sculpture in question, by the way, is Alfred Gilbert's *Mors Janua Vitae* (or 'Death, the Gateway to Life'), part of the collection at Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery, which is visited by Kelly and Victor following a Saturday-afternoon toddle round Sefton Park, where the same artist's statue of Eros is another landmark. In no way does it seem contrived, however, that Gilbert's works are a perfect thematic fit in this dramatic context, since throughout the film it's as if the urban/nature contrast between Liverpool and its environs is a setting for, and an expression of, the transience/transcendence ideas dramatised through the love story. That's quite some trick to pull off, though it can surely be read as a development of Evans's previous documentary work – from 2003's

co-directed London portrait *Finisterre* to the recent urban-fringes Thames-side odyssey *The Outer Edges* – which concerns itself with what one might broadly term 'psycho-geography'.

Here, though, he's found a way to combine his visual facility for the portraiture of location with an engrossing emotional narrative, resulting in a fascinating interchange between what's going on with the people and what's happening with the places. There's a telling shot in the opening scene-setting of *Kelly + Victor* which looks past high-rise blocks to wind turbines turning at sea. At this early juncture, their significance is not apparent, but as the camera repeatedly returns to them we grasp how they represent the intersection of man and nature, now and eternity, which is central to the whole story. Wind meets blade, idea meets image, and what Evans generates is cinematic electricity. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Produced by</b> Janine Marmot	<b>Company</b> A Hot Property Film and Venom Film production	<b>Dean</b> <b>Mark Womack</b> Frank
<b>Screenplay</b> Kieran Evans	<b>Developed with the assistance of Film4</b>	<b>Claire Keelan</b> Victoria
<b>Adapted for the screen by</b> Kieran Evans, Niall Griffiths	<b>In association with</b> Bord Scannán na hÉireann/Irish Film Board	<b>Gabrielle Reidy</b> Kelly's mum
<b>Based on the book by</b> Niall Griffiths	<b>Developed and supported by</b> the Film Agency For Wales	<b>Cemahl</b> Tamumo-Mullin
<b>Director of Photography</b> Piers McGrail	<b>Made with the support of</b> The National Lottery through the Arts Council of Wales	<b>Connor</b> Lisa Millett
<b>Editors</b> Tony Kearns Nathan Nugent	<b>Executive Producer</b> Keith Potter	<b>Lizzie</b> Johann Myers
<b>Production Designer</b> Anthea Nelson		<b>Mikey</b>
<b>Sound Recordist</b> Jim Mulhearn		<b>In Colour</b>
<b>Costume Designer</b> Orla Smyth-Mill		<b>Distributor</b> Verve Pictures
		<b>8,479 ft +8 frames</b>
<b>©Hot Property K and V Limited and Venom Films Limited</b>	<b>Cast</b> <b>Antonia Campbell-Hughes</b> Kelly <b>Julian Morris</b> Victor <b>Stephen Walters</b> Gaz <b>William Ruane</b> Craig <b>Michael Ryan</b> Pete <b>Shaun Mason</b>	

**Liverpool, present day.** Shop assistant Kelly is attracted to scrapyard worker Victor across the dance floor. They have sex at her flat, and he's turned on by her choking and biting him. He's still thinking about her the next day when driving his friends to a drug pick-up in the countryside. Kelly, meanwhile, accompanies her dominatrix friend Vicky to a session with a client, where she's concerned for the latter's pain threshold. Back at his squat, Victor creates a mix-CD for Kelly, which he brings when they meet the following weekend. After a walk in the park, they admire a Victorian couple's sculpted memorial in the Walker Art Gallery. In the pub afterwards she dismisses his declaration of affection as 'soft', later binding his hands during sex so that he can't resist when she carves their initials in his back. The experience leaves Victor wary of calling Kelly again, especially when his wounds are noticed in the changing room after football. Kelly visits her estranged mother, encountering Pete, her ex, who's under a restraining order to stay away. Victor meanwhile continues to explore the dark side of sexuality, almost killing himself during erotic auto-asphyxiation. That night he finds Kelly bleeding in the street from a head wound after a run-in with Pete. Their most extreme sexual encounter follows, taking strangulation to its limits when Victor opts not to stop her, and pays with his life. The next morning, inspired by a belated SMS from Victor, Kelly plays the mix-CD, crying over his dead body.



Leaving a mark: Antonia Campbell-Hughes, Julian Morris

## Nobody's Daughter Haewon

Republic of Korea 2013  
Director: Hong Sangsoo  
Certificate 12A 90m 13s

### Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Wouldn't you know it? It's taken 17 years for a Hong Sangsoo film to reach British distribution, and now that it's happened at last, they've picked the wrong one. *Nobody's Daughter, Haewon* is Hong's 14th feature, the first of two shot last year and released in 2013. It's typical of his work in some ways, but in other ways not. British fans – and there are plenty: the London Film Festival has shown almost everything, and the Independent Cinema Office organised a comprehensive retrospective which toured the UK only three years ago – know Hong for his humour, his keen sense of the ways men and women lie to themselves and each other, and his playful approach to storytelling themes and variations. *Nobody's Daughter, Haewon* is not at all humorous, sketches its questions about sexual and marital fidelity without much conviction and makes next to nothing of its narrative riddles. Worse, its subtitles are noticeably poor.

The film chronicles three separate days in March–April 2012 from the life of its protagonist Haewon, a slacker student of film at university who thinks she has it in her to be an actress. Haewon keeps a diary but spends a lot of time dozing, and the film – crucially – makes no distinction between events she actually experiences and events she imagines. Across the three days Haewon says goodbye to her mother, who is emigrating to Canada to live with her son, and toys with the idea of reactivating her secret affair with one of her teachers. She also has a number of other encounters – with a tourist (Jane Birkin, playing herself) who's lost in Seoul, with her old friend Yeonju, who's in a stable long-term relationship with a married man, with a US-based Korean who's urgently looking for a new wife, and with various classmates – some of which are obviously daydreams springing from her longings and/or her insecurities.

Haewon speaks about her departing mother in the opening moments (she has snatches of voiceover throughout, presented as sentences from her diary), and so the film's title tips us the wink that this young woman wants to see herself as independent and autonomous, free of family ties. Everything that follows shows us that Haewon falls very far short of this ideal: she's impetuous, needy and often lacks self-confidence. Her image of herself as 'motherless' is undermined the moment she imagines Jane Birkin telling her that she looks a bit like Charlotte Gainsbourg. Her best quality is her inability to lie; she tends to blurt out truths, even when it's socially disadvantageous to do so, sometimes with a strong assist from Korean *soju* liquor. (Her most often repeated line is "I want to drink!") The many shots of her dozing, at home, in cafés and in a library, suggest that she's actually in a cocoon of her own making, essentially unformed. Whether this makes her a compelling or engaging protagonist is open to question. A lot will depend on the viewer's individual response to Jung Eunhae's central performance.

The biggest single issue on Haewon's mind is marriage. Walking past the motel in which she lost her virginity triggers affectionate



Daydream believer: Jung Eunhae, Lee Sunkyun

memories of the man who did the deed: Lee Seongjun (Lee Sunkyun, seen in a too-similar role in Hong's *Ok's Movie*), who's married and has a child. He also happens to be one of her teachers, which made the relationship doubly taboo and forced the lovers to be extremely discreet. Even by the standards of weak men

in Hong Sangsoo films, Professor Lee is a poor advertisement for adultery – or, indeed, marriage in general. He's a failed filmmaker (his students call him out on taking the teaching job when he's previously made fun of intellectuals in his movies), prone to nervous dithering and spasms of unreasonable anger, liable to burst into tears



Garden of forking paths: Ye Ji-won, Jung Eunhae, Lee Sunkyun





when he listens to the Beethoven he carries around in a tinny cassette recorder. Is he really such a feeble specimen of Korean manhood, or merely presented as Haewon thinks of him? The film leaves us to judge for ourselves. Either way, the character is too unprepossessing to represent a serious marital option for Haewon, any more than he is for his hapless (unseen) wife.

Hong is celebrated for his 'garden-of-forking-paths' plots, in which events are shown to have several different possible outcomes or dialogue is replayed, with variations, in different contexts or with different characters. This has generally drawn attention to the tricks and traps of storytelling itself—a modernist gambit which reflects both Hong's American education and the distance between him and others in the Korean film industry. The trope has long been one of the mainstays of his humour; he's found much wry amusement in watching, for example, one person's view of an angry or flirtatious conversation and then, later, the other party's. *Nobody's Daughter* has its share of 'forking paths': Haewon has the same conversation twice (with different men) over a bin of second-hand books, a burning cigarette butt thrown down on the road is seen twice (once in close-up) before Haewon stamps on it while dissing the behaviour of smokers in voiceover, and, more intriguingly, Haewon finds something written in a café's comment book which replicates

*By presenting thoughts and deeds side by side, on an equal footing, Hong is clearly exploring the ways the mind works*

words she's just heard from a "cute" stranger.

The point of reference endlessly trotted out by critics to 'place' Hong's satires of mating rituals is Eric Rohmer, but as the comment-book example shows there are much closer parallels with the Alain Resnais of *Muriel* (1963) and *Mon oncle d'Amérique* (1980). By presenting thoughts and deeds side by side, on an equal footing, Hong is clearly exploring the ways the mind works. Haewon's thought processes are associative; the repetitions and variations are evidence of her impulse to think through her problems by playing them out in different situations and with different casting. This, as much as her fantasy that she could be Korea's answer to Charlotte Gainsbourg, suggests that she'd be better off in a drama school than a film school. Perhaps it also explains the deliberate clunkiness of some of the performances in her fantasies. The trouble is that all these roads lead us back to Haewon's shortcomings as a young woman in the dating game. Where Resnais asked quasi-scientifically how much of our behaviour is pre-programmed genetically, Hong merely observes that Haewon is chronically confused, uncertain and too often attracted to older, unsuitable men.

Obviously, even a sub-par Hong Sangsoo movie is preferable to anything by a director like Park Chanwook. In auteur terms, *Nobody's Daughter* is notable for extending the distinction that Hong routinely draws between the hard liquor soju and the mellower rice wine *makkeoli*: drinking soju always provokes anger, recriminations and blurted home truths, while *makkeoli* (provided for Haewon by an enigmatic hiker at Fort Namhan) promotes equanimity and nostalgic reflection. The film anyway has its pleasures, not least those of seeing members of Hong's 'stock company' in action again. Take Yu Junsang, as the more mature of the film's two married men with lovers; he enjoys playing against the boyish type he embodied as the lifeguard in *In Another Country* (2012). But there's no escaping the fact that the film doesn't have the formal muscle to cut it as a fictional construct; Hong's other films (including this one's follow-up, *Our Sunhi*) are more robust and more entertaining. The book that sends Haewon to sleep in the library is Norbert Elias's *The Loneliness of the Dying*—absolutely fitting for a movie in which the entire concept is subordinated to the wayward thoughts of a deeply solipsistic protagonist. ☹

#### Credits and Synopsis

**Producer**  
Kim Kyounghee  
**Written by**  
Hong Sangsoo  
**Cinematographers**  
Kim Hyungkoo  
Park Hongyeol  
**Editors**  
Hahm Sungwon

**Music**  
Son Yeonji  
**Sound**  
Jeong Yongjin  
Kim Yongjoo

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**Production Companies**  
Lee Seongjun

A Jeonwonsa Film Co. production

**Cast**  
**Jung Eunchoe**  
Haewon  
**Lee Sunkyun**  
Lee Seongjun

**Kim Eui-sung**  
Jung-won  
**Kim Ja-ok**  
Jin-joo, Haewon's mother  
**Yu Jun-sang**  
Joong-sik  
**Ye Ji-won**  
Yeon-ju

**Jane Birkin**  
herself

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
StudioCanal Limited

8,119 ft +8 frames

Korean theatrical title  
**Nugu-ui ttal-do**  
anin Haewon

**Film student Haewon writes her diary and dozes.** 21 March 2012: after a farewell meeting with her mother, who is emigrating to Canada, Haewon finds herself thinking about her past secret affair with Lee Seongjun, a married filmmaker-turned-professor. She impulsively calls him and he rushes to join her. But in a restaurant they are embarrassed to run into a group of Haewon's classmates. Lee is surprised to discover how unpopular Haewon is. Haewon gets drunk and leaves. 27 March 2012: Haewon agrees to meet Lee again. He takes her to Fort Namhan, where they chat about his unhappy marriage, his desire to quit teaching, and their philosophies of life. But things turn bad when Haewon admits that she had an affair with

fellow student Jaehong; Lee swears at her and Haewon leaves. 3 April 2012: Haewon goes to the college library for the first time in a while. She confesses her past affair with Lee to classmate Yuram, and hears from another classmate that Lee has hurt his face in a fall. That afternoon she is approached by Jungwon, who teaches in San Diego; recently divorced, he has spent three weeks in Korea looking for a new wife. Haewon meets her friend Yeonju, who brings along her long-term married lover Jungshik. They go to Fort Namhan together. Lee calls Haewon and rushes over. He says he has left his wife and begs Haewon to run away with him, but then picks a fight over her inability to lie. Haewon leaves.



History man: Stuart Hall

## The Stuart Hall Project

United Kingdom 2013  
 Director: John Akomfrah  
 Certificate 12A 103m Os

### Reviewed by Ashley Clark

"Stuart Hall was kind of a rock star for us," writes director John Akomfrah in a statement accompanying his latest essay film. "For many of my generation in the 70s... he was one of the few people of colour we saw on television who wasn't crooning, dancing or running. His very iconic presence on this most public of platforms suggested all manner of 'impossible possibilities'."

Accordingly, *The Stuart Hall Project* is a strongly personal work for the director. Culled from over 100 hours of archival footage featuring Hall, it unfolds simultaneously as a tribute to a heroic figure, a study of the emergence of the New Left and its attendant political ideas, and a summation, in thematic and technical terms, of the key characteristics of Akomfrah's body of work thus far (intertextuality, archival manipulation, a focus on postcolonial and diasporic discourse in Britain). The third key creative partner is the late Miles Davis, whose music – a shared passion of Akomfrah and Hall – is used to map a complementary emotional and temporal landscape which encapsulates the film's moods and themes. The end result is a densely woven tapestry of ideas, which the viewer may need more than one crack at to fully absorb.

In structural terms, *The Stuart Hall Project* rejects the conventional linearity of standard

biographical documentaries (say, Kevin Macdonald's *Marley*, 2012) and instead plays out across contrasting temporal planes, reflecting its subject's suggestion in the film that societies exist in a cyclical "state of permanent revolution". Though the key domestic and international historical events featured (including, but not limited to, West Indian migration to the UK, the Suez Crisis, the Hungarian Uprising, the birth of youth counterculture, the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War), and Hall's mixed experiences with 'Britishness' as a post-war immigrant, are addressed in broadly chronological fashion, they are offset

by a constant, diverse stream of Hall's wide-ranging media appearances and voiceovers. Presumably often taken from radio broadcasts, Hall's audio contributions are frequently unmoored from concrete time, consequently opening up, for the viewer, a liminal space for reflection rather than the limiting confines of contemporaneous commentary.

Another of the film's key organising principles falls within the realm of the aural; the use of Davis's melancholy-suffused music ("When I was 18 or 19," says Hall early in the film, "Miles Davis put his finger on my soul"). Davis's music, save for an early blast of 1968's



All that jazz: Stuart Hall



'Filles de Kilimanjaro', is also structured in chronological order, a neat by-product of which is to map the trumpeter's development as a musician in step with international events. For example, the electronic wigginess of 'Bitches Brew' (1968) seems a perfect tonal match for the year's political unrest. Akomfrah and sound designer Trevor Mathison have a feel for the improvisatory nature and unresolved quality of jazz music, which fits in with a particular trend of dissonance in post-war artistic culture (from William Burroughs's cut-up poetry to John Heartfield's photomontage), and informs editing patterns. But it's not all discordance: the film's centrepiece – a deeply moving, genuinely beautiful image-stream of birth, family, death, travel and Civil Rights-era visuals – is set to the title track from one of Davis's most radical and divisive albums, *In a Silent Way*. But, in a neatly ironic touch, the song's most gentle, pastoral passage is used: the calm before the storm.

Amid the audiovisual bricolage, it is notable just how accessible Hall's ideas are, given their intellectual weightiness. This is partly down to the seductively allusive manner of the film's editing, but also the compelling presence of the subject: Hall is gregarious, good-looking and highly charismatic – a pleasure to spend time with. Much of the film's archival content is culled from official public record (the majority of the footage is from the BBC), and this fact highlights Hall's eminent skill in crystallising complex ideas into digestible, relatable information for public consumption. The film's most moving passages follow him on a trip back to Jamaica in the late 80s to try to decipher the DNA of the Caribbean and confront the colourism that he was subjected to by his own mother ("three shades darker", he felt like an outcast). Moreover, thanks to Hall's innate perspicacity and capacity for self-analysis, the film never feels hagiographic. He is honest about his shortcomings, which include being blindsided by the onset of feminism. Shortly after meeting his wife Catherine, he confesses, "Feminism taught me the difference between a conviction in the head and a change in the way you live." At another juncture, Hall stresses the importance of a self-reflexive politics



Driving force: 'The Stuart Hall Project'

### *Much of the film's archival content highlights Hall's skill in crystallising complex ideas into digestible, relatable information for public consumption*

("...which cannot expect automatic support"), and this principle is embedded in the film's fabric; broadly speaking the film exhibits an undeniably leftist stance but is never dogmatic in tone.

Inasmuch as the film is a celebration of its subject, it can also be read as a multi-stranded, parallel lament – for the passing of the time when a prominent leftwing intellectual enjoyed such a presence on television, and also as an elegy for a life lived. There's no escaping the knowledge (burnished by the overarching presence of Davis's minor-key tones) that as the film unfolds, its subject, now 81, is coming closer to death. However, while the final frames convey a strong sense of an ending with regard to Hall's time in the spotlight, *The Stuart Hall Project* offers cause for celebration as a successful crystallisation of Akomfrah's work to date; it is crafted in the style of, and intentionally haunted by, the ghosts of his previous films.

In accordance with its overarching theme of collapsing temporalities, *The Stuart Hall Project* shares a clear relationship with Akomfrah's debut *Handsworth Songs* (1987). An essay film inspired by Hall's pioneering theoretical model for coding and decoding mass-media materials, it employed collagist documentary devices to challenge dominant media responses to the area's civil unrest. And in the later film, when Hall observes, "Every new configuration contains masses of the old... Each time it comes it requires a new perspective," he could be talking about the director's body of work.

*The Stuart Hall Project's* closest relative is 2010's *The Nine Muses*, to which it plays like the flipside of the same LP (*In a Silent Way*, perhaps?). If the earlier film was the definitively elegiac piece for the Windrush generation, the latter represents a more forensic take on a fragment of it. Though equally calm and ruminative, it is more accessible than its predecessor because it utilises one single figure as a conduit for complex

themes instead of a fount of diverse, open-to-interpretation classical literary references. The connections between the films are both cosmetic and thematically deep; both began their lives in different mediums (*The Nine Muses* as a video installation, *Mnemosyne*, *The Stuart Hall Project* as a three-screen video entitled *The Unfinished Conversation*), and they use the same font for titles and intertitles. Though the use of found footage is largely restricted to Hall (as opposed to the kaleidoscopic range of *The Nine Muses*), there are still a number of oblique sequences of travel and harsh elemental imagery (wind, rain and snow) as transitional scenes to evoke the spectral emotion of a post-war immigrant's journey to England. The key through-line is the reference to Homer's *The Odyssey*, which is identified by Hall as his intellectual "way out" from the psychological and spatial difficulties of being a black immigrant in 1952; it is also the key text underpinning *The Nine Muses'* core transposition of classical western mythology to the story of post-war immigration. The overall effect is a satisfying sense of continuity and a pleasing momentum that two such challenging, complementary works have been created, distributed and exhibited in such close proximity. (In the intellectually restrictive climate of British cinema, we can't take this for granted.)

Simultaneously elegiac and light, dense and accessible, *The Stuart Hall Project* is a singular work with a built-in replay value, and possessed of its own distinct sensibility. There is also the sense that it fits into a broader developing trend within contemporary non-fiction filmmaking which exhibits what we might dub a Janus-inflected 'recycling aesthetic': it uses the past in a contemporary way to point forward. Like Asif Kapadia's *Senna* (2010) and Jason Osder's forthcoming *Let the Fire Burn*, it generates a considerable emotional force from reconstituting existing material to revelatory storytelling effect. Ultimately, though, the overriding impression left by *The Stuart Hall Project* is of a sparkling meeting of minds and creative disciplines orchestrated by one of our most gifted non-fiction filmmakers. Black, British, proudly intellectual and now into his fourth decade of pursuing a restlessly experimental craft: it is perhaps now Akomfrah's turn to be cast in the role of rock star by an emerging generation of thinkers and critically engaged viewers. **S**

#### Credits and Synopsis

##### Producer

Lina Gopaul  
David Lawson

##### Written by

John Akomfrah

##### Director of

Photography

Dewald Aukema

##### Editor

Nse Asuquo

##### Composer

Trevor Mathison

##### Dubbing Mixer

Robin Fellows

©British Film  
Institute, Smoking

##### Dogs Films

##### Production

##### Companies

British Film

Institute presents

in association with

BBC Archive, Arts

Council England,

Creation Rebel Films,

Smoking Dogs Films,

The Open University,

Time/Image

A Smoking Dogs film

production made

in association with

Creation Rebel Films

Made with the

support of the

British Film Institute

Film Fund

##### Executive

##### Producers

Paul Gerhardt

Tony Ageh

Bill Thompson

##### In Colour

[1.85:1]

##### Distributor

BFI Distribution

9,270 ft +0 frames

**An essay film about influential cultural theoretician and political commentator Stuart Hall, who arrived in England from Jamaica on a Rhodes Scholarship in 1951. The film is comprised almost entirely of archive material (home movies, family photographs, excerpts from Hall's many film, television and radio appearances), plus other stock footage, and is predominantly scored by the recorded works of jazz musician Miles Davis. It concludes with a dedication reading: "For Stuart Hall, with deep gratitude and respect."**

## About Time

USA/United Kingdom 2013  
Director: Richard Curtis  
Certificate 12A 123m 23s

### Reviewed by Kate Stables

After his ill-fated dalliance with 60s nostalgia in *The Boat That Rocked* (2009), writer-director Richard Curtis has returned to the sunny Sloane romcom format that made him a one-man global brand as a screenwriter. All the familiar Curtisland tropes are in place in *About Time*, as self-deprecating lawyer Tim undergoes the requisite comic agonies of English embarrassment while seeking to snag the American publisher he's fallen in love with at first sight (or at first sound, since they first fumblingly encounter one another at eat-in-the-dark restaurant Dans le Noir). You can also check off the obligatory wild-child female, irritating housemate, covetable country house and feelgood montages featuring a shiny, sanitised London. Not to mention a wedding and a funeral.

What injects a mildly unexpected note, however, is Curtis's decision to incorporate a magic-realist element. Tim has inherited the ability to time-travel into his past, albeit in a comic life-tidying fashion rather than the mournful history-changing possibilities of, say, *La Jetée* (1962) or *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1972). Neither does this facility impart dramatic life-lessons in the style of *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) or *Groundhog Day* (1993). In a pleasingly English (if eventually wearisome) fashion, the device is used chiefly to remedy the everyday gaffes and

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Tim Bevan  
Eric Fellner  
Nicky Kentish Barnes

**Written by**  
Richard Curtis

**Director of Photography**  
John Guleserian

**Editor**  
Mark Day

**Production Designer**  
John Paul Kelly

**Music**  
Nick Laird-Clowes

**Production Sound Mixer**  
Adrian Bell

**Costume Designer**  
Verity Hawkes

**Companies**  
Universal Studios  
Universal Pictures

presents in association with  
Relativity Media  
a Working Title production  
**Executive Producers**  
Richard Curtis  
Liza Chasin  
Amelia Granger

#### Cast

**Domhnall Gleeson**

**Tim**

**Rachel McAdams**

**Mary**

**Bill Nighy**

**dad**

**Tom Hollander**

**Harry**

**Lindsay Duncan**

**mum**

**Margot Robbie**

**Charlotte**

**Lydia Wilson**

**Kit Kat**

**Richard Cordery**

**Uncle D**

**Joshua McGuire**

**Rory**

**Tom Hughes**

**Jimmy Kincade**

**Vanessa Kirby**

**Joanna**

**Will Merrick**

**Jay**

**Lisa Eichhorn**

**Jean, Mary's mother**

**In Colour**

**[2.35:1]**

**Distributor**

Universal Pictures

International

UK & Ire

**11,104 ft +8 frames**

England, present day. Tim, a young lawyer, is told by his father that he has inherited the ability to time-travel into his own past. Tim falls in love with Mary but loses her number when he reworks the evening they met. Time-travel lets him meet her repeatedly and replace her new boyfriend. During their courtship, Tim uses time-travel to create great sex, win his cases and rework embarrassing moments. Tim and Mary marry. When Tim's sister has a drunken car crash, he time-travels back to dodge the incident. He is forced to undo this, however, on discovering that time-travel to events before his child's birth results in a different child being born. His father develops terminal cancer. Tim revisits every day, to make everyone around him happier. After his father's funeral, Tim visits him in the past. But the imminent birth of Tim's third child means that they must part for good. Tim eschews time-travel, resolving to live every day as if he had travelled back to savour it.



A kind of loving: Domhnall Gleeson, Bill Nighy

misunderstandings that blight Tim's love affair.

This rewindable romance gives Curtis the chance to provide his hero and heroine with three meet-cutes, each trickier and chattier than the last. Domhnall Gleeson (doing a pitch-perfect rendition of Hugh Grant's bumbling, flirtatious diffidence) and an engaging Rachel McAdams bring an enviable lightness of touch to their repeat encounters. Yet the film's energy and inventiveness are swallowed up in maintaining this narrative plate-spinning, at the expense of both characterisation and believability. The emotional ambivalence in the partnerships of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) and *Notting Hill* (1999) was their strong suit, but this endlessly tweaked perfect match pales rapidly. Partly because McAdams's Mary is tediously sweet-natured, an oddity among Curtisland's worldly women. As the critic Anna Smith has pointed out, Mary is also, discomfitingly, the unwitting subject of Tim's secret do-over lifestyle. Everything from their first gauche sexual encounter to Tim's muffed proposal is fair game for a stutter of comic repeats.

Curtis, who regards as a critical fallacy the idea that the harsh or violent is more 'real' in cinema than depictions of everyday happiness, turns nonetheless to a more dramatic register than usual for the film's second half. Trying to use time-travel for more than Photoshopping his own life, Tim butts up against its limitations, unable to rescue those he loves from fate's crueller blows. In an extension of the 'love is everywhere' homiletic tendency of *Love Actually* (2003), he sets about spreading a little happiness on his daily round, in a principled but preachy sequence. This is merely an opening salvo of sentimentality, however. When Bill Nighy's nigh-on-perfect Dad is diagnosed with terminal cancer, tumbling his son into a welter of father-son chats and ping-pong battles, the film brings out the emotional big guns. Curtis uses unusually intimate handheld shots to emphasise their closeness. As Gleeson and Nighy part for the last time, their final scenes and whispered goodbyes have the film's most tender, tearjerking moments.

Maligned for their generic qualities, Curtis's movies often, in fact, mirror his personal preoccupations. Perhaps that's why there's a poignant midlife feel to the cherish-every-moment lesson he hammers home this time, despite the film's outwardly youthful romance. *About Time*'s deceptively light comedy about rewinding the imperfect past turns out to be freighted with reminders to relish the remarkable present. **S**

## Ain't Them Bodies Saints

USA 2013  
Director: David Lowery

### Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Dark, moody, available-light interiors; hauntingly beautiful magic-hour photography; meandering, subjective, centripetal dialogue. It's hardly surprising that almost every account of writer-director David Lowery's third feature has evoked early Terrence Malick. There are plot nods to *Badlands*, too, in its theme of young lovers united on a crime spree, though Rooney Mara's focused, self-reliant Ruth has nothing of the wide-eyed naivety of Sissy Spacek's Holly. But what *Ain't Them Bodies Saints* misses is the clarity of *Badlands* or *Days of Heaven* – not their visual clarity (there's no shortage of limpid Texas skies), but their narrative coherence.

Motivations, often, are frustratingly obscure. When Bob (Casey Affleck), Ruth's boyfriend and the father of her daughter Sylvie, escapes from jail and starts heading home, his nemeses aren't so much the authorities as the three gun-toting and largely uncharacterised heavies set on tracking him down. Just why – personal vengeance, bounty hunting? – is left unexplained, though a remark by Bob's friend Sweetie, in whose café he takes refuge, hints that it's possibly the former. Likewise it's a mystery why Ruth, while professing unfailing fidelity to Bob (who took the rap for her shooting a deputy, and who writes to her from prison every day), never goes to visit him, let alone take along the daughter he's never seen.

These and other lacunae in plotting and motivation make it hard to engage with the characters. No reproach to the actors, who make the most of their thin material. Affleck lends Bob – desperate to get back to his lover but knowing that his return risks disaster to her and his daughter – something of the wounded intensity he brought to Robert Ford in Andrew Dominik's *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007). Mara's Ruth holds the centre of the film with her weary stoicism, and a dour Keith Carradine lurks around the edges with an unsettling mixture of protectiveness and menace (more opaque motivation here). The film's almost stolen, though, by Ben Foster as Patrick Wheeler, the decent-minded deputy whom Ruth shoots and wounds in an early scene – not that he knows it was Ruth who shot him. Rather than turn into the stock vengeful cop figure, he wistfully



Camera obscura: Casey Affleck, Rooney Mara



## Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa

United Kingdom/Luxembourg 2013

Director: Declan Lowney

Certificate 15 90m 3s

### Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Alan Partridge is an emblematic figure of an era without symbols: the Major years, of which there were six and a half, none of them freighted with the imagery the preceding Thatcher decade summons up. The Marxist writer Perry Anderson has said that British history "since the fall of Thatcher has been of little moment"; Alan is the man of that little moment. He first appeared manning the *On the Hour* sports desk in 1991, was given his own chat show in 1992, the year of Major's general election victory, and perched briefly atop the light-entertainment tree in 1994 when *Knowing Me, Knowing You* transferred to television. Nemesis, in the form of smoothie BBC commissioning editor Tony Hayers, came with the New Labour government in 1997.

But Alan, as so often, had the last laugh, outliving Hayers to bounce, if not all the way back, at least to a mid-morning slot on local radio (also in an election year, 2010). Throughout a career punctuated by fatal accidents and gross humiliations, he has adapted, evolved (not revolved), bowed and scraped, drawing on deep reserves of low cunning. *Alpha Papa* unfolds the secret of Alan's survival by presenting him with a convoluted crisis of self-interest which requires genuine guile to navigate.

A routine backstabbing from Alan leads to the sacking of recently widowed fellow DJ Pat Farrell (Colm Meaney) from North Norfolk Digital, or Shape as its new parent company Gordale has renamed it, which in turn leads to Farrell returning to the station with a shotgun and taking the staff hostage. Alan is sent in by the police to aid negotiations, but he soon sees that prolonging the siege might improve his media profile despite the risk of death, which is mostly borne by his younger co-host, Sidekick Simon (Tim Key). Thus Alan has to weigh the competing demands of Farrell, the police, his assistant Lynn (Felicity Montagu), who takes a dim view



Man of Alan: Steve Coogan

of his publicity-seeking antics, and Angela (Monica Dolan), a hostage he wants to impress.

Most complex of all is his mediation between Gordale, embodied by its besuited yet tieless boss and adolescent breakfast DJ, and the people of Norwich, who want good old North Norfolk Digital back. There was a feeling when Alan Partridge first appeared, in keeping with the spirit of the age, that his brand of pabulum was 'moribund'. In reality, television news has become more, not less, like *The Day Today*, and in retrospect Alan's multiple-interviewee pile-ups were more finely balanced than they first appeared. In any case, there is no sense in *Alpha Papa* that his replacements' brand of pabulum will be any better. Gordale, ie radio behemoth Global, thus makes a timely adversary. Like Colonel Blimp, Alan is a once-satirical figure become halfway sympathetic.

He is also, as ever, extremely funny. There are a couple of self-deflating allusions to *Alpha Papa*'s status as a movie, notably when Alan tries to impress his new bosses with a cinephile observation about *The Godfather* ("camera angles"), but the format does enable an expansion of the Alan world, into the flatlands of Norfolk, without losing its quality of mundanity. Ⓔ

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Toby Halbrooks  
James M. Johnston  
Jay Van Hoy  
Lars Knudsen  
Amy Kaufman  
Cassian Elwes  
**Written by**  
David Lowery  
**Director of Photography**  
Bradford Young  
**Editor**  
Craig McKay  
Jane Rizzo  
**Production Designer**  
Jade Healy  
**Music**  
Daniel Hart  
**Sound Design**  
Kent Sparling  
**Costume Designer**  
Malgosia Turzanska

©ATBS  
**Productions LLC**  
**Production Companies**  
IFC Films, Evolution  
Independent, Paradox  
Entertainment, Lagniappe

Films present in association with  
The Weinstein Company a Sailor Bear, Primary Productions and Parts & Labor film  
**Executive Producers**  
Logan Levy  
Jesse Kennedy  
Mark Burg  
Mike Menchel  
Fredrik Malmberg  
Daniel Wagner  
Harvey Weinstein  
Bob Weinstein

**Cast**  
**Casey Affleck**  
Bob Muldoon  
**Rooney Mara**  
Ruth Guthrie  
**Ben Foster**  
Patrick Wheeler  
**Nate Parker**  
Sweetie  
**Rami Malek**  
Will  
**Keith Carradine**  
Skerritt  
**Kennadie Smith**  
Jacklynn Smith

Sylvie Guthrie  
**Robert Longstreet**  
Cowboy Hat  
**Charles Baker**  
Bear  
**Kentucker Audley**  
Freddy

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

Meridian, Texas, the 1970s. Bob Muldoon, his girlfriend Ruth Guthrie and their friend Freddy carry out robberies, watched over by their surrogate father Skerritt. After a bank robbery the trio hole up in an abandoned farmhouse, where Freddy is killed in a shootout with police. Ruth shoots and wounds deputy sheriff Patrick Wheeler. Bob takes the rap for Ruth, who's pregnant, and is given a long jail term. Ruth brings up their daughter Sylvie under the protection of both Skerritt, who lives nearby, and Patrick, who's romantically attracted to her. Bob writes to Ruth every day and she remains faithful to him, but never visits him in jail.

Four years later, Bob breaks out of jail and starts making his way home. He hides in a room above the café run by his friend Sweetie, and digs up a buried case containing loot from his robberies. He visits Skerritt, who warns him to stay clear of Ruth and Sylvie and get far away from Texas. Skerritt is visited by three gunmen looking for Bob; he hints that if they kill Bob they can share the loot. Patrick comes looking for Bob at Sweetie's place, but Bob escapes just in time. He stakes out Ruth's house but, seeing her celebrating Sylvie's birthday with Patrick, he leaves. The three gunmen track him down; Bob shoots two dead but is himself fatally wounded. Skerritt and the third gunman kill each other in a shootout. Bob makes his way to Ruth's house and dies in her arms.

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Kevin Loader  
Henry Normal  
**Screenplay**  
Neil Gibbons  
Rob Gibbons  
Steve Coogan  
Armando Iannucci  
Peter Baynham  
Based upon characters created by Steve Coogan, Armando Iannucci, Patrick Marber, Peter Baynham  
**Director of Photography**

Ben Smithard  
**Editor**  
Mark Everson  
**Production Designer**  
Dick Lunn  
**Original Music**  
Ilan Eshkeri  
**Production Sound Mixer**  
Bob Newton  
**Costume Designer**  
Julian Day

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Corporation and The British Film Institute  
**Production Companies**  
StudioCanal, BBC  
Films and BFI present a Baby Cow Films production  
In association with Anton Capital Entertainment, S.C.A.  
Developed with the assistance of BBC  
Films and BFI  
Made with the support of BFI's Film Fund

**Executive Producers**  
Jenny Borgars  
Danny Perkins  
Christine Langan  
Joe Oppenheimer  
Steve Coogan  
Armando Iannucci  
Peter Baynham  
Neil Gibbons  
Rob Gibbons

### Cast

**Steve Coogan**  
Alan Partridge/  
Jason Statham/  
Jason Bourne/

Jason Argonaut  
**Colm Meaney**  
Pat Farrell  
**Felicity Montagu**  
Lynn Benfield  
**Anna Maxwell Martin**  
Janet Whitehead  
**Darren Boyd**  
Martin Fitch  
**Simon Greenall**  
Michael  
**Nigel Lindsay**  
Jason Tresswell  
**Dustin Demri-Burns**  
Danny Sinclair  
**Monica Dolan**  
Angela Ashbourne

**Phil Cornwell**  
Dave Clifton  
**Tim Key**  
'Side Kick Simon'  
**Simon Delaney**  
Don  
**Sean Pertwee**  
Steve Stubbs

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
StudioCanal Limited  
**8,104 ft +8 frames**

Norwich, the present. Radio station North Norfolk Digital is brought under the control of Gordale Media and renamed Shape. On learning that the new bosses intend to get rid of one of the older DJs, Alan Partridge convinces them to sack Pat Farrell. Pat, a grieving widower, arrives at the station's relaunch party with a shotgun, taking the staff hostage. Alan escapes but is persuaded by the police to go back in to facilitate a negotiation. Through his ineptitude he fails in this task, and through his cowardice he misses chances to disarm Pat. The siege becomes a national media story, stoked by Pat and Alan, who continue to broadcast. Alan

determines to exploit the situation to his advantage with station chief Jason, despite his antipathy towards Gordale, which he shares with Pat – and with the listening public. Jason manages to get Pat's gun, but is himself Tasered by breakfast host Danny Sinclair, who has learnt that Alan is to take his slot. Alan and Pat get away in the station's outside-broadcast van, drawing crowds as they pass through Norwich. However, Pat discovers Alan's role in his sacking, leading to a confrontation on Cromer pier. Alan disarms the suicidal Pat and survives being shot by the police. North Norfolk Digital is revived and Alan is made its star presenter.

## The Artist and the Model

Spain 2012  
Director: Fernando Trueba

### Reviewed by Maria Delgado

Artistic creativity has featured in many of Spanish director Fernando Trueba's films ever since his debut *Opera prima* in 1980. During the euphoria of the 1980s, Trueba's protagonists were often hip young musicians and writers; as he got older, so did his central characters. *Chico & Rita* (2010, co-directed with Tono Errando and Javier Mariscal) opens with the elderly Chico being transported back in time as he hears one of his songs on the radio to relive a fiery romance with his muse Rita. Marc Cros, the ageing sculptor played by Jean Rochefort in *The Artist and the Model*, also discovers something of the energy of his youth when he meets new model Mercè (a spirited Aida Folch) as the effects of Nazi occupation are felt in the sleepy French town where he lives with his wife – and former muse – Léa.

*The Artist and the Model* revolves around inspiration and imagination, and seeks to elucidate a central question that so often defies explanation: how is art made? Marc is observed at work for prolonged periods of time as smudged lines start to suggest a female form and the building up of layers of clay shapes flesh from the skeletal structure of a sculpture.

This is a film about ways of seeing – a concern it shares with Jacques Rivette's *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991). Mercè, whose consciousness has been shaped by the Spanish Civil War, looks at Marc in bemusement when he advocates remaining calm in their quiet corner of France while WWII rages around them: "I have a sculpture to finish, with or without the war," he insists. Mercè, on the other hand, risks danger by hiding a Resistance fighter despite Marc's protestations. These two positions find a shared moment of intimacy in the film's most exquisite scene, as Marc explains Rembrandt's *A Child Learning to Walk* to Mercè. His careful reading – "Learn to look at things with attention" – points to the importance of taking time to observe the details of a piece of work. The placing of the two characters in the frame, juxtaposed with shots of the battered sketch Marc holds in his wrinkled fingers, suggests a shared emotional space and a rare moment of understanding, something that's never present in the scenes where she poses for him.

The film also functions as an elegy of sorts.



Male gaze: Aida Folch, Jean Rochefort

Dedicated to sound engineer Pierre Gamet, who died soon after completing *The Artist and the Model*, and Trueba's brother Máximo, a sculptor, it harks back to an earlier era on several levels. Rochefort is brought together on screen with Claudia Cardinale (as Léa) for the first time since *Cartouche* more than 50 years ago – so that when Marc tells his wife, "They don't make bodies like yours any more," it seems as much a reference to the Cardinale of *The Leopard* (1963) and *Once upon a Time in the West* (1968) as it is to the fictional Léa. Indeed, the film juggles a series of intertextual references, from the impish little boys spying on the naked Mercè, who appear to have been conjured from an Henri Cartier-Bresson photograph, to Chus Lampreave's no-nonsense housekeeper, a reworking of the down-to-earth characters she's created for Almodóvar for three decades.

At a time when Spain's exhibition sector is struggling with a hike in VAT and central and regional governments continue to cut cultural budgets, the film puts a persuasive case for the importance of art as a source of spiritual nourishment and a way of making sense of the world in compromised times. Marc searches for a certain artistic purity, a pared-down beauty with no superficial adornments, and this is paralleled in Trueba's own practice. *The Artist and the Model* is a leaner, more melancholy work than his Oscar-winning *Belle Époque* (1992), another historical drama about the idealistic pursuit of beauty. It is a meticulously composed tale, in which the director returns with a renewed sense of urgency to subjects that have defined his oeuvre for the past 33 years. 

## Austenland

USA 2013  
Director: Jerusha Hess  
Certificate 12A 96m 39s

### Reviewed by Ryan Gilbey

Until now, Jerusha Hess has worked exclusively as a co-writer with her husband Joshua on the three eccentric comedies he directed. *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004), *Nacho Libre* (2006) and their jubilant masterpiece *Gentlemen Broncos* (2009) had in common a thrift-store aesthetic, off-kilter rhythms and winning compassion. Now Hess makes her directing debut with *Austenland* (on which her husband is credited only as associate producer), a romantic comedy about two single American women who go on holiday to a Jane Austen theme park on an English country estate. If the directorial touch feels occasionally unsteady, this could be attributable to a number of elements that impinge on the normally single-minded sensibility of a Hess film. These include working for the first time from material not of her own devising – she adapted the screenplay with Shannon Hale from Hale's original novel. And it would be unwise to discount the influence of a producer whose name ranks far higher in marketing terms than any cast member: *Twilight* author Stephenie Meyer.

*Austenland* represents the first fruits of Meyer's production company, Fickle Fish Films, and it's possible to discern a certain book-club blandness symptomatic of projects that cater self-consciously to an under-represented audience – in this case single and/or wistful middle-aged women – rather than generating material organically. *Austenland* has attracted column inches by organising female-only advance screenings, and there is a sense in which it feels as much like a think-piece generator as it does a movie. The romantic to-ing and fro-ing, as heroine Jane flip-flops between her attraction to 'stable-hand' Martin and her flirtatious banter with arrogant toff Mr Henry Nobley, is essentially insipid, though it is lent a suspenseful edge by an ongoing ambiguity: are these men advertising an interest in Jane as part of the 'Austenland' experience, or is real attraction breaking through the pantomime? If we never care whether Jane finds love, our interest is piqued by the possible fraudulence of her potential suitors. To its credit, the film doesn't tip its hand until near the end, with the intriguing result that we can never quite get our bearings on any consistent reality: it's as though Shirley Valentine has gone on holiday to Westworld.

Hess's devotion to all things oddball keeps the screen fizzing with vitality. After a performance of comic genius from Jemaine Clement in *Gentlemen Broncos*, his Flight of the Conchords cohort Bret McKenzie is authentically charming



If the suitor fits: JJ Field, Georgia King

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Cristina Huete  
**Written by**  
Fernando Trueba  
Jean-Claude Carrière  
**Director of Photography**  
Daniel Vilar  
**Editor**  
Marta Velasco  
**Production Designer**  
Pilar Revuelta  
**Sound Recorder**  
Pierre Gamet  
**Costume Designer**  
Lala Huete

@[none given]  
**Production Companies**  
A Fernando Trueba  
P.C. S.A. production  
With the participation  
of TVE, Gobierno de

España/Ministro  
de Cultura, ICAA  
- Instituto de la  
Cinematografía  
y de las Artes  
Audiovisuales  
With financing from  
ICO, - Instituto de  
Crédito Oficial,  
Audio Visual  
A film by Fernando  
Trueba

**Cast**  
**Jean Rochefort**  
Marc Cros  
**Aida Folch**  
Mercè  
**Claudia Cardinale**  
Léa  
**Chus Lampreave**  
María  
**Götz Otto**

Werner  
**Christian Sinniger**  
Émile  
**Martin Gamet**  
Pierre  
**Mateo Deluz**  
Henri  
**Simon Guibert**  
priest

**In Black and White**  
[2.35:1]  
Subtitles

**Distributor**  
Axiom Films Limited

Spanish  
theatrical title  
**El artista y la modelo**

**France, 1943. Elderly artist Marc Cros lives with his wife Léa in a small town near the Spanish border. Shopping at the market, Léa and housekeeper María see a young woman sleeping in a doorway. She is Mercè, a refugee from Franco's Spain. Léa offers her lodgings in exchange for her services as a nude model for Marc. Mercè begins posing for him. She stumbles on Resistance fighter Pierre in the forest and takes him home with her, despite Marc's protestations. Pierre and Mercè are alarmed by the visit of Werner Bodenhofer, a German officer who was previously a professor of art history at the University of Munich, but Werner doesn't suspect that Pierre is anything other than Marc's assistant. Marc helps Pierre to gain safe passage into the mountains. Mercè remains with Marc until he finishes his sculpture, leaving for Marseille when Léa goes to visit her sick sister. The sound of a gunshot suggests that Marc has killed himself.**



as the pretty but prickly Martin. The dottiest and most inspired sequences stray behind the scenes into the actors' quarters, where dapper employees in period dress watch videos, do press-ups and charge laptops while a hatchet-faced cook turns kebab skewers over a barbecue.

The director has retained the services of Jennifer Coolidge (who played the hero's pleasantly demented mother in *Gentlemen Broncos*) and has let her off the leash entirely: as Jane's fellow American tourist 'Miss Elizabeth Charming', Coolidge is every bit as sweet, glorious and vulgar as a tottering multi-tiered cake. Her strangulated attempts at a cod-English accent ("cheeky monkey" is "cheekay munkay", "largesse" becomes "large arse") are delightful enough, her mastery of physical comedy exemplary – she has an infinite repertoire of pouts, twitches and eyelash-flutters, and there's a wonderful moment when she accidentally sews her lace gloves into her needlepoint. The question of whether love really is "straightforward and lasting" only in fiction is likely to feel less pressing to us than the hopes that Elizabeth might be granted her own spin-off movie. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Stephanie Meyer  
Gina Mingacci  
**Written by**  
Jerusha Hess  
Adapted for  
the screen by  
Jerusha Hess &  
Shannon Hale  
Based on the novel  
by Shannon Hale  
**Director of  
Photography**  
Larry Smith  
**Editor**  
Fenton  
**Production  
Designer**  
James Merifield  
**Music**  
Ilan Eshkeri  
**Sound Recordist**  
Tim Barker  
**Costume Designer**  
Annie Hardinge  
**©Sony Pictures**

**Entertainment Inc.  
Production  
Companies**  
Sony Pictures  
Classics presents  
in association with  
Stage 6 Films a  
Fickle Fish Films  
and Moxie Pictures  
production  
**Executive  
Producers**  
Dan Levinson  
Robert Fernandez

**Cast**  
**Keri Russell**  
Jane Hayes  
**JJ Field**  
Mr Henry Noble  
**Bret McKenzie**  
Martin  
**Jennifer Coolidge**  
Miss Elizabeth  
Charming  
**James Callis**

Colonel Andrews  
**Georgia King**  
Lady Amelia  
Heartwright  
**Rupert Vansittart**  
Mr Wattlesbrook  
**Ricky Whittle**  
Captain George East  
**Jane Seymour**  
Mrs Wattlesbrook

**Dolby Digital  
In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
Sony Pictures  
Releasing  
**8,698 ft +8 frames**

England, the present. Two American tourists meet at the airport on their way to Austenland, a theme park that promises immersion in the world of Jane Austen. Jane Hayes (who is given the name 'Jane Erstwhile') is an Austen-obsessed single woman in her thirties; her slightly older fellow tourist is known as 'Miss Elizabeth Charming'. They are taken by driver Martin to meet the imperious owner Mrs Wattlesbrook. During the ensuing days, Jane falls for Martin and flirts with the standoffish Mr Henry Noble. She is almost expelled when a mobile phone is discovered in her belongings (guests are expected to eschew all modern trappings) but a cast member takes the blame at Henry's insistence. At the end of the holiday, Jane learns that Martin's attraction to her was scripted. Crestfallen, she threatens to go public about an attempted sexual assault by Mrs Wattlesbrook's drunken husband. At the airport, Martin and Henry both argue that their affection for Jane is real, but the former is revealed as a fraud sent by Mrs Wattlesbrook to placate her. Jane returns to the US and packs away her Austen-related memorabilia. Henry arrives to declare his love. Elizabeth buys Austenland and gives it a jazzy makeover.

## A Belfast Story

United Kingdom 2013  
Director: Nathan Todd  
Certificate 15 99m 18s

### Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Old hatreds die hard in this dismal attempt to turn Northern Ireland's uneasy peace into a crime thriller. A series of murders disposing of former IRA terrorists by methods familiar (shootings in a remote field), grisly (tied to a nail-bomb detonated indoors) and slightly absurd (a poisoned pasty supper!) put Colm Meaney's veteran Loyalist-leaning detective on the spot, since he's only too aware that the victims' past misdeeds have long gone unpunished.

Meaney's dilemma seems a worthwhile starting point but first-time writer-director Nathan Todd proves hapless in proceeding further, given his film's soporific pacing and reams of forced expositional dialogue, all in service of a plot that runs the gamut from impenetrable to barely believable. Sincerity is certainly evident in Tommy O'Neill's laboured performance as the province's First Minister, anxious that his Republican beginnings will come back to bite him, but sincerity alone won't commend this uninvolved procedural to viewers unconcerned with the North's ongoing political travails, and won't make it any more dramatically rewarding for those who are. **S**



'A Belfast Story'

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
John Todd  
**Written by**  
Nathan Todd  
**Director of  
Photography**  
Peter A. Holland  
**Edited by**  
John Wright  
**Production  
Designer**  
Nigel David Pollock  
**Music**  
Nick Glennie-Smith  
Mac Quayle  
**Sound Mixers**  
Kevin O'Connell  
Christian P. Minkler  
**Costume Designer**  
Tiziana Corvisieri

**Production  
Companies**  
Kaleidoscope

Entertainment  
presents a Todd  
family film in  
association with  
Ntrigue Productions

**Cast**  
**Colm Meaney**  
Detective  
**Malcolm Sinclair**  
Chief Constable  
**Tommy O'Neill**  
First Minister  
**Tim McGarry**  
police station  
bomber  
**Patrick Rocks**  
Eammon  
**Damien Hasson**  
Damien  
**Susan Davey**  
aide

**Gordon Mahn**  
killer 1  
**Patrick Buchanan**  
killer 2  
**Maggie Cronin**  
Sinead  
**Stuart Graham**  
crony  
**Ian Beattie**  
Colum  
**Deborah Wiseman**  
Coleen

**In Colour**

**Distributor**  
Kaleidoscope  
Entertainment  
**8,937 ft +0 frames**

Belfast, present day. An embittered veteran detective investigates the brutal murder of an ex-IRA man while remaining under surveillance by the Chief Constable, who is concerned that the detective may take the law into his own hands. Meanwhile the province's First Minister is anxious that his own Republican terrorist background may be exposed. The slayings continue. Eventually the detective retires rather than apprehend the killers; the First Minister is shot dead at his party congress. A month later the perpetrators reveal their identity: the vengeful son of a Nationalist garage owner killed by the IRA and a Loyalist aggrieved that justice has not been served by the peace process. On the first day of a united Ireland, members from Ulster take their place in the Irish parliament.

## Borrowed Time

Director: Jules Bishop

### Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Jules Bishop's *Borrowed Time*, the latest offering from Film London's Microwave scheme supporting micro-budget filmmakers, is an utterly confounding tonal mishmash which chances its arm at a variety of genres (buddy comedy, vigilante thriller, social realism) and gets them all disastrously wrong.

Bishop's script features occasional flickers of subtextual anger at the lack of opportunities for young people in contemporary Britain ("How am I supposed to be anything?" wails deadbeat protagonist Kevin), but any such political thrust is undercut by a grimly stereotyped portrayal of working-class life, an unpalatable avalanche of cartoonish, one-dimensional characters and preposterous lacunae in logic: the entire plot revolves around an attempt by a comedy villain to extort money from someone who is quite clearly homeless and penniless.

Ultimately, *Borrowed Time* feels less like a fully realised film than a semi-promising idea for a comic short stretched to interminable length. It features some of the lamest jokes ever committed to film ("Do you fancy a light snack?" asks villain 'Ninja' Nigel at one point, jamming a lightbulb into Kevin's mouth), and the estimable Philip Davis deserves better than his ludicrous, offensive role as a truculent taxidermist-cum-vigilante. **S**



Small time: Philip Davis

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Olivier Kaempfer  
**Written by**  
Jules Bishop  
**Director of  
Photography**  
David Rom  
**Editor**  
Fiona DeSouza  
**Production  
Designer**  
Miren Marañón  
**Composer**  
Christopher Barnett  
**Production  
Sound Mixer**  
Libero Colimberti  
**Costume Designer**  
Sophie Howard

**Production  
Companies**  
Film London  
presents a Parkville

Pictures production  
A Microwave Film  
in association  
with BBC Films

**Cast**  
**Theo Barklem-Biggs**  
Kevin  
**Philip Davis**  
Philip  
**Juliette Oldfield**  
Becky  
**Ted Cozzolino**  
Grant  
**Perry Benson**  
Ted  
**Warren Brown**  
'Ninja' Nigel  
**Jumayn Hunter**  
Ben  
**Andrew Ellis**  
Dan

**Hammed Animashaun**  
Leon  
**Katie Stephen**  
Stevie  
**Joey Fitzgerald**  
Clayton

**In Colour**

**Distributor**  
Parkville Pictures

East London, present day. Teenage drifter Kevin needs to raise money to buy back the antique clock he 'borrowed' from his sister and then sold to a pawnbroker for easy cash. Local criminal 'Ninja' Nigel gives Kevin some weed to sell but Kevin is ripped off by the first buyer, a dreadlocked Rasta with a peculiarly unconvincing patois. Now owing money to Nigel, Kevin unsuccessfully attempts to rob the house of eccentric taxidermy enthusiast Philip. The pair become uneasy allies, and Philip helps Kevin hide from Nigel. It is revealed that Nigel and the 'Rasta', both from Liverpool, are friends, and have been scamming Kevin. Armed with Philip's gun, Kevin threatens the pair, who concede defeat. Kevin returns the clock to his sister.

## Elysium

Director: Neill Blomkamp  
Certificate 15 109m 24s

### Reviewed by Tom Charity

Universal healthcare gets a big-budget fantasy endorsement in Neill Blomkamp's visually arresting but thinly written sci-fi blockbuster.

After allegorising apartheid in the dystopian, generously praised *District 9* (2009), Blomkamp gets back on his high horse for *Elysium*, a terse and beautifully mounted movie hamstrung by the filmmaker's own crude screenplay and binary vision. The governing idea of a world divided between a wealthy elite and an impoverished underclass is at least as old as science fiction itself, and can be found in everything from H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* all the way to last year's *Total Recall* remake. Of course, the theme remains more than relevant, and if he doesn't make it fresh, Blomkamp at least keeps it real, rooting the film in the dichotomies of today's Los Angeles and Mexico City, just as *District 9* drew on contemporary Johannesburg.

The City of Angels in the year 2154 is not so much a mega-city as a mega-shantytown, a vast favela, graffiti on every surface mirroring the gangster ink on the downtrodden inhabitants. In one of Blomkamp's wittiest touches, not only are the predominantly Latino inhabitants policed by robo-cops, but even low-level bureaucrats such as parole officers are automatons. Meanwhile,

### Credits and Synopsis

#### Produced by

Bill Block  
Neill Blomkamp  
Simon Kinberg

#### Written by

Neill Blomkamp

#### Director of

Photography

Trent Opaloch

#### Edited by

Julian Clarke

#### Production

Designer

Philip Ivey

#### Music

Ryan Amon

#### Production

Sound Mixer

David Husby

#### Costume Designer

April Ferry

#### Visual Effects by

Image Engine

Whiskytree

The Embassy

Method

Moving Picture

Company

Industrial Light

#### and Magic

#### Production

Companies

TriStar Pictures

presents in

association with

Media Rights Capital

A QED International/

Alphacore/Kinberg

Genre production

With the

participation of The

Province of British

Columbia Production

Services Tax Credit

#### Executive Producer

Sue Baden-Powell

#### Cast

Max

Jodie Foster

Delacourt

Sharlto Copley

Kruger

Alice Braga

Frey

Diego Luna

#### Julio

Wagner Moura

Spider

William Fichtner

John Carlyle

Brandon Auret

Drake

Josh Blacker

Crowe

Emma Tremblay

Matilda

Jose Pablo Cantillo

Sandro

Maxwell Perry

Cotton

young Max

Faran Tahir

President Patel

#### Dolby Atmos/

Datasat /SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

#### Distributor

Sony Pictures

Releasing

9,846 ft +0 frames

The year 2154. Polluted and overpopulated, Earth is now a second-class state. The wealthy and powerful live on an idyllic space station named Elysium.

Max, who lives in the sprawling shantytown of Los Angeles, is trying to put his criminal past behind him. An industrial accident leaves him with just five days to live – unless he can get to Elysium, where scanners can cure any ailment in seconds. In order to get there, Max agrees to smuggler Spider's plan to fit him with a metal exoskeleton, then kidnap wealthy industrialist Carlyle and transfer data from his brain into Max's. Max inadvertently downloads a plan to rewrite the constitution and put Elysium's reactionary defence secretary Delacourt in control. Delacourt's agent Kruger is hard on Max's tail. Kruger double-crosses Delacourt but Max defeats him in combat and, sacrificing himself, revises the constitution to bestow equal rights for all.



Brain drain: Matt Damon

orbiting beyond the ozone, the hoi polloi swap *bons mots* in English and French and live it up in swanky mansions with verdant grounds, all encompassed in a spherical, atmosphere-controlled, solar-powered space station – Beverly Hills out of Kubrick's 2001. There is something quite beautiful about this artificial orb shining like a new moon, and no wonder everyone down on Earth looks at it with envy and wonder.

These broad strokes are rendered with considerable finesse. In a blockbuster season dominated by apocalyptic fantasies, *Elysium* stands apart for its rich visual textures and creative design: the ubiquitous barcodes that denote the status of every citizen, for example, and the one-size-fits-all exoskeleton riveted on to Matt Damon's back with everyday power tools by black-market gangsters.

But Blomkamp's imagination fails him when it comes to fleshing out character and mapping a coherent narrative. Presumably he is shooting for mythopoetic in a prologue introducing Max (Damon) and sweetheart Frey (Alice Braga) as children under the benevolent care of a Spanish-speaking nun, but his subsequent recourse to replaying 'significant' (actually banal) lines and motifs from this opening betrays both a lack of faith in his audience and his own shortcomings, which include a reliance on dramatic shortcuts, lazy contrivances and woolly thinking.

The villains here are especially cut and dried: Jodie Foster's overzealous security secretary Delacourt; William Fichtner's callous billionaire CEO; and Sharlto Copley's rogue undercover agent Kruger, the walking definition of a loose cannon but apparently Elysium's only armed defence system. Copley plays him as a gung-ho instrument of state sadism, with a snarling Afrikaans accent. You can tell these are the bad guys by their tendency to say things like, "I was going to cure that sick little girl but now I'll make sure she never gets better."

Delacourt's plot to overthrow the 'soft' regime on Elysium by downloading a new constitution is almost comically simple, and subverted just as easily by reluctant revolutionary Max. Meanwhile the film's backing of the Hispanic underclass is undermined by casting the shaven-headed but unmistakably Anglo Damon as their champion.

If the political allegory is facile, at least Blomkamp's curt, comic-book storytelling keeps the movie skimming along the surface, which is where it works best. DP Trent Opaloch ensures that the split-screen focus on the lifestyles of the rich and the desperate is eloquence itself, and the CG effects are seamless. **B**

## Emperor

USA/Japan 2012  
Director: Peter Webber

### Reviewed by Thomas Dawson

"Let's show them some good old-fashioned American swagger," barks Tommy Lee Jones's no-nonsense General Douglas MacArthur, as he lands in a war-ravaged Tokyo in 1945. Despite the actor's top billing in the promotional materials, sadly he disappears for most of this dreary historical drama, leaving centre stage to Matthew Fox's stiff-as-a-board General Fellers, who at MacArthur's behest conducts an investigation into Emperor Hirohito's culpability for war crimes. The imperial leader himself, the subject of Aleksandr Sukorov's *The Sun* (2005), is only glimpsed in the climactic meeting over tea with the supreme commander of the Allied forces.

Directed by Peter Webber (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*) and scripted by David Klass and Vera Blasi, *Emperor* takes great pains to remind us that when it comes to Japan, western outsiders must grasp that they are encountering a "nation of contradictions" in which appearances are deceptive and issues must be seen "not in black-and-white" terms. Fellers's own inquiry, however, proceeds in a predictably mechanical fashion: suspects initially stonewall their American interrogator, before offering potentially useful information that leads to the next individual in the trail. At Fellers's darkest hour – having been beaten up by locals while drunk in a dingy bar – comes the clichéd last-minute revelation, in which a previously uncooperative official demands a meeting in the middle of the night and provides fresh evidence regarding an attempted military putsch following Hirohito's radio announcement of surrender.

Fellers's romance with the beautiful Japanese schoolteacher Aya (Hatsune Eriko), for which apparently there is no historical evidence, fails to ring dramatically true. Slow-motion flashbacks at the beginning and end of the film show the lovers gambolling through a forest. Throughout the story, however, Aya feels less like a flesh-and-blood character than a decorative symbol of a nation's soul. It's unclear why her death in an air raid towards the end of the war – a mission that Fellers attempts to prevent – constitutes what her uncle, a general (Nishida Toshiyuki) terms an honourable death.

In cinematically recreating the ruined Japanese capital, director Peter Webber, DP Stuart Dryburgh and production designer Grant Major rely heavily on CGI imagery to convey the scale



Bitter victory: Matthew Fox, Hatsune Eriko



of the destruction wrought by Allied attacks. But none of the digital effects in *Emperor* can match the haunting power of the archival footage, used in the opening sequence, relating to the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (A similar problem afflicts Margarethe von Trotta's *Hannah Arendt* in terms of the monochrome newsreel images of Adolf Eichmann in court overshadowing the dutiful period recreations.)

Given the catastrophe of recent American intervention in Iraq and the ongoing war in Afghanistan, it's interesting that *Emperor* revisits an earlier US military occupation of a foreign country. Aware that hanging Hirohito might plunge Japan into chaos, MacArthur ignores "the cretins in Washington" and decides to spare the Emperor, believing that this will enable the successful rebuilding of a shattered nation. Decisive military generals, in other words, especially if they are played by Tommy Lee Jones, can be trusted, not democratically elected politicians. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

#### Produced by

Yoko Narahashi  
Gary Foster  
Russ Krasnoff  
Eugene Nomura  
**Screenplay**  
David Klass  
Vera Blasi  
Based on the book  
*His Majesty's  
Salvation* by  
Shiro Okamoto

#### Director of

**Photography**  
Stuart Dryburgh  
**Film Editor**  
Chris Plummer  
**Production Designer**  
Grant Major  
**Music**  
Alex Heffes  
**Production Mixer**  
Fred Enholmer  
**Costume Designer**  
Ngila Dickson

©Fellers Film, LLC  
**Production**

#### Companies

Krasnoff/Foster  
Entertainment  
in association  
with United  
Performers' Studio  
A Peter Webber film  
Filmed with the  
assistance of Film  
New Zealand

#### Cast

**Matthew Fox**  
General Bonner  
Fellers  
**Tommy Lee Jones**  
General Douglas  
MacArthur  
**Eriko Hatsune**  
Aya Shimada  
**Masayoshi Haneda**  
Takahashi  
**Colin Moy**  
Major General  
Richter  
**Masatoshi Nakamura**  
Prince Konoe

#### Isao Natsuyagi

Teizaburo Sekiya  
**Masato Ibu**  
Koichi Kido  
**Takataro Kataoka**  
Emperor Hirohito  
**Shohei Hino**  
Hideki Tojo  
**Toshiyuki Nishida**  
General Kajima  
**Kaori Momoi**  
Mitsuko Kajima

**Dolby Digital/  
DataSat  
In Colour  
[2.35:1]  
Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
The Works UK  
Distribution Ltd

Japan, August 1945. Following the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Japanese surrender announced by Emperor Hirohito, US General Bonner Fellers lands in Tokyo as military attaché to General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander for the Allied Powers. MacArthur instructs Fellers to conduct an investigation into Hirohito's role in the war and ascertain whether the Emperor should receive the death penalty for war crimes. Assigned a Japanese chauffeur, Fellers travels around the city questioning various high-ranking officials, including General Tojo and former prime minister Konoe Fumimaro. Flashbacks depict Fellers's romance with a Japanese woman, Aya, a former exchange student in America whom he visited in Tokyo in 1940.

Fellers visits Aya's uncle, a former general, who confirms that she died in a bombing raid. Granted permission to enter the Imperial Palace, Fellers interviews senior civil servant Sekiya, who relates how Hirohito read out a peace poem at a crucial war-planning meeting.

Fellers presents his report to MacArthur, stating that there is no definitive evidence to prove Hirohito's guilt or innocence. MacArthur arranges to have tea with the Emperor: ignoring imperial protocol, he shakes the latter's hand, poses for an official photograph and vows to set Japan back on its feet.

## Filth

United Kingdom/Germany/Sweden/Belgium/USA 2013

Director: Jon S. Baird

Certificate 18 97m 20s

See industry  
section,  
page 16

### Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

As the most scabrously pitch-black of all Irvine Welsh's chronicles of Lothian lowlife, *Filth* would seem an especially daunting – and unlikely – candidate for adaptation. Then again – as evinced by Abel Ferrara and Werner Herzog's wildly contrasting bad lieutenants, David Peace's *Red Riding* saga and Oren Moverman's *Rampart* – transgressive, dirty cops remain a morbidly fascinating screen proposition. Welsh's abject DS Bruce Robertson, a bigoted, scheming, bipolar junkie, is a solipsistic narrator in the mould of *American Psycho*'s Patrick Bateman, prone to outrageous fantasy and fervid appreciations of soft-rock. An overly literal adaptation would probably look and sound something like Gaspar Noé's *Seul contre tous* (1998) relocated from the *banlieue* to the Borders – in fact, the opening gambit of director Jon S. Baird's screenplay is to have Bruce (James McAvoy) voice a splenetic broadside against Scotland, in a similar manner to the trashing of France delivered by the hate-spewing butcher of Noé's film. The Bruce presented here, though, has had some jagged edges filed – most notably his unrepentant racism – while Baird, perhaps mercifully, focuses more on the character's spiritual rather than physical corruption.

Without much in the way of plot, the novel's picaresque structure largely remains intact. A murder occurs within five minutes but it's of little interest to Bruce, who lurches from one debauched vignette to the next – S&M affairs, sexually blackmailing the underage daughter of a hated lawyer, making obscene nuisance calls to the frustrated wife of his sole friend, timid fellow Freemason Clifford Blades – with

a mixture of glee and manic desperation. An expert manipulator, Bruce deploys dirty tactics in racing for a promotion that he hopes will lure back his absent wife Carole, glimpsed in direct-to-camera addresses from insalubrious nightspots.

*Filth*'s undoubted trump card is McAvoy's ferocious performance. What may have seemed risky casting pays off as, with minor cosmetic enhancement (puffy skin, red-rimmed eyes, extra flab), he nails Bruce's combined self-disgust and narcissism. There's solid support too from Eddie Marsan as the hapless, cuckolded Blades, Shirley Henderson as his wife Bunty, John Sessions as Bruce's wannabe screenwriter boss (a more radical adaptation might have exploited the meta potential offered by the novel's device of confusing Bruce's narration with his superior's burgeoning screenplay) and Jim Broadbent as caustic shrink Dr Rossi. This latter character replaces the self-aware tapeworm that inhabits Bruce in the novel, which ultimately provides his sorry backstory (it also provides a droll political irony – a socialist invader in a Thatcherite body – that's missing here).

Baird's direction is brash and busy, and some of the comedy is pitched very broadly – a self-conscious musical number that has Carole duetting with a cabbie played by David Soul falls flat. There's nothing in the film that can match any of the set pieces from 1996's *Trainspotting* for ingenuity, although Baird does at times recall Terry Gilliam, as Bruce's increasingly hallucinatory visits to Rossi signal his mental collapse. After so much cheerful amorality, the pile-up of pathos that ensues later feels a mite dishonest – the clunky use of Radiohead's 'Creep' doesn't help. Still, if it struggles to maintain its tone, *Filth* deserves some credit for making a confident fist of an intimidating source. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

#### Produced by

Ken Marshall  
Jon S. Baird  
Trudie Styler  
Jens Meurer  
Christian Angermayer  
Celine Rattray

Mark Amin  
Stephen Mao  
Will Clarke  
James McAvoy

**Written by**  
Jon S. Baird  
Based on the novel  
by Irvine Welsh

**Director of**  
**Photography**  
Matthew Jensen

**Editor**  
Mark Eckersley

**Production Designer**  
Mike Gunn

#### Music

Clint Mansell  
**Sound Recorder**  
Dirk Bombay  
**Costume Designer**  
Guy Speranza

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**Production Companies**  
A Steel Mill Pictures,  
Logie Pictures  
production  
In association with  
Maven Pictures, Film  
House Germany  
An Egoli Tossell Film/  
Pinewood Studio  
Berlin Film Services  
co-production  
In co-production  
with Filmgate Films,

Film i Väst and Entre  
Chien et Loup  
In association  
with Altitude Film  
Entertainment,  
Lionsgate UK,  
Mollywood, Creative  
Scotland  
A film by Jon S. Baird  
Produced with the  
support of the Belgian  
Federal Government  
Tax Shelter

**Executive Producers**  
Mohammed Hans  
Dastmalchi  
Marc Hansell  
Pierre Lorinet  
Benjamin Melkman  
Yasin Qureshi  
Jean-Pierre Valentini  
Charles E. Bush Jr

Jon Harris  
Zygi Kamasas  
Guy Avshalom  
Nick Meyer  
Marc Schaberg  
Irvine Welsh  
Matt Petzay  
Jane L. Bruce  
Stefan Haller  
Robin Houcken  
Ralph Dietrich  
Karin Dietrich  
Stephan Giger

#### Cast

**James McAvoy**  
Detective Sergeant  
Bruce Robertson  
**Jamie Bell**  
Ray 'Raymundo'  
Lennox

#### Martin Compston

Gorman  
**Kate Dickie**  
Chrissie  
**Emin Elliot**  
Peter Inglis  
**Joanne Froggatt**  
Mary  
**Shirley Henderson**  
Bunty Blades  
**Gary Lewis**  
Gus Bain  
**Shauna Macdonald**  
Carole  
**Brian McCaig**  
Dougie Gillman  
**Imogen Poots**  
Amanda Drummond  
**John Sessions**  
Chief Inspector  
Bob Toal  
**Eddie Marsan**

Clifford 'Bladesey'  
Blades  
**Jim Broadbent**  
Dr Rossi

**Dolby Digital  
In Colour  
[2.35:1]**

**Distributor**  
Lionsgate UK  
**8,760 ft +0 frames**

Edinburgh, present day. Bruce Robertson, a bigoted, corrupt, substance-abusing detective, hopes to win back his estranged wife Carole by beating colleagues – including younger partner Ray Lennox – to a promotion. At intervals we see Carole at various nightspots, speaking to camera about Bruce's failings. Bruce's latest case is the murder of a foreign student by a street gang, a crime that Carole appears to witness. However, Bruce remains uninterested in the case. His only friend, meek accountant and fellow Freemason Clifford Blades, confides in Bruce that he's unable to satisfy his frustrated wife Bunty. Bruce begins making obscene phone calls to Bunty. He is drawn to Mary, the

widow of a heart-attack victim he tries in vain to revive. To oust a rival for promotion, Bruce bribes a rent boy to feign acquaintance with the man at a police social. Bruce inadvertently frames Blades for making the obscene calls, and subsequently embarks on an affair with Bunty. Bruce's mental state deteriorates: he has hallucinations involving his psychiatrist and revisits a past trauma wherein his actions led to the death of his younger brother. Dressed as Carole, Bruce is accosted by the street gang, who identify him as the murder witness. Bruce kills the ringleader; afterwards he is discharged from the force. Lennox wins the promotion. Bruce hangs himself, just as Mary and her son knock on his door.

## For Those in Peril

United Kingdom/Sweden/Australia 2013  
Director: Paul Wright

### Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

Writer-director Paul Wright's debut feature is a poetic but sometimes ponderous study of an outsider in a small Scottish fishing village. The film is certainly very richly textured. In his storytelling, Wright combines mythical elements with documentary realism – as if John Grierson and Herman Melville have collided head-on – and makes frequent use of voiceover, old photographs and home-movie and cell-phone footage. The editing (supervised by Danish maestro Anders Refn, father of Nicolas Winding Refn) is lithe and impressionistic as the film jumps constantly back and forth in time, and there is a strong central performance from George MacKay as Aaron, the adolescent visionary who can't explain, or even remember, the accident at sea that killed his brother Michael and the rest of the crew on a fishing trip from which he is the only survivor.

What makes the film drag in parts is its extreme self-consciousness and solemnity. The emphasis is on image and emotion rather than narrative or character development. It's never explained why the villagers are so hostile towards Aaron, and there's a tension in the way Wright depicts them – on one hand, this is a down-to-earth fishing community; on the other, the inhabitants are intensely superstitious (we hear them calling Aaron "fucking Jonah") and behave as if they are on leave from some Old Testament morality fable. There isn't the slightest trace of humour to lighten proceedings.

Wright's screenplay is deliberately enigmatic. He withholds information about Aaron's life before the accident, though we get fleeting glimpses in old video footage of his brother, who was his protector but with whom he appears to have had a very strained relationship. "It's like he's never grown up," we hear one villager say of Aaron. Nor do we discover why Frank (Michael Smiley), the father of Michael's girlfriend Jane, so detests the two brothers. In an early voiceover, Aaron refers to mums and dads telling their little kids about "the devil in the ocean". What isn't clear is whether the



Sea change: George MacKay

entire village believes in this myth or whether it's something Aaron has conjured up as he tries to cope with his own survivor's guilt.

Certain sequences – for example, when Aaron breaks into a swimming pool at night with Jane (Nichola Burley) and we see slow-motion footage of them in the water together – look as if they've been taken from a rather arch pop promo. There are traces of mawkishness, too, especially when Ewan MacColl's famous love song 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face' is either hummed on the soundtrack or sung by Aaron's mother (Kate Dickie) on a karaoke night.

Rather than try to unpick the motivations of Wright's protagonists or question too closely how the mysterious accident occurred in the first place, it's better to take *For Those in Peril* as a mood piece – a meditation on love and loss in a small fishing community. The look of the film is grey and desaturated (the sun doesn't shine much in this village). However, where there are traces of colour – when Aaron discovers a yellow fishing coat on the shore, when we see blood in the water – the effect is all the more startling. Wright's ability to conjure up lyrical and surprising imagery isn't in question, even as the storytelling here sometimes stumbles. Ⓜ

## 42

USA 2013  
Director: Brian Helgeland  
Certificate 12A 128m 3s

### Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

As integral to the uniquely ridiculous mythopoeia of Hollywood as a 12-bar progression is to the blues, the inspirational sports movie has no greater context than baseball, a modern summer game structured so that each moment for each individual – on the field, on the mound or at bat – offers the opportunity for personal triumph. Conceived therefore in the American brainpan and in showbiz as an Elysium of rugged, modest heroes, baseball has always had a fiercely intimate relationship with its society. (In 2013, it's not terribly difficult in the New York boroughs to find fresh tattoos memorialising Thurman Munson, the Yankee catcher who died in a plane crash in 1979.) The story of Jackie Robinson, who in 1947 became the first black player to be brought into the Major League show, therein breaking the 'colour line' in the segregated sport and contributing to the build of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s, has a particularly heroic, folkloric glow, and the impulse to cinematicise it into an all-American chest-sweller was so strong that Robinson was egged into starring as himself in 1950's ill-advised *The Jackie Robinson Story*.

The big-budget remake that Spike Lee wanted to make for years has finally arrived, but from very white writer/director Brian Helgeland, who as a top-shelf industry scriptsmith has displayed a deft chameleonic sensibility. For *42*, the colours he's adopted aren't funky-urban-bluesy but resplendent Spielbergian gilding. The film is so golden, so worshipful, so predictable in its amber-lit crane-shot wonder-schmaltz, that it often feels as though Helgeland is trying to evoke nostalgically not the late 40s but rather the late 80s. It's *The Color Purple* of sports movies, and it makes Barry Levinson's self-consciously iconic *The Natural* (1984) seem almost noir-esque by comparison. The overweening style assaults every scene, from Robinson's first obligatory display of righteous indignation in response to a Southern gas-station attendant (who forbids him to use the toilet) to the man's every at-bat, shot with such awe and scored so fulsomely with Mark Isham's angelic cataract of strings and French horns that you'd think you were watching Zeus facing off against Typhon.

The Spielbergian glow, dumb as it is, can warm your baser nerve endings if you let it, and the cast, led by Chadwick Boseman's open-faced Robinson and Harrison Ford's avuncular character turn as Dodgers executive Branch Rickey, are all earnest and solid, even if filling out bland clichés. But *42*, and indeed Robinson's story as it is inevitably interpreted via Hollywood inspirationalism, has a fundamental structural problem too. The steadily undulating shape of Helgeland's screenplay never varies; Robinson encounters racism and suffers through it, over and over again, without any shading or texture or perspectival nuance to interfere with the relentless sermon-making. (The mid-film concern with replacing suspended manager Leo Durocher with the ineffectual Burt Shotton, played gently by Max Gail, is the only substantial detour.) Robinson's life was not merely a series of racist confrontations; certainly a real filmmaker, a Cassavetes or a Loach or even a Spike Lee, could've found confounding ambivalences and unpedantic resonances in this man's journey

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Mary Burke  
Polly Stokes  
**Written by**  
Paul Wright  
**Director of Photography**  
Benjamin Kracun  
**Editor**  
Michael Aaglund  
**Production Designer**  
Simon Rogers  
**Original Score**  
Erik Enoeksson  
**Production Sound Mixer**

Stevie Haywood  
**Costume Designer**  
Jo Thompson  
  
©Channel  
Four Television  
Corporation/British  
Film Institute/  
Creative Scotland  
and Warp X Limited  
**Production Companies**  
BFI/Film4/  
Creative Scotland  
in association with  
Screen Yorkshire

A Warp X production  
A Warp X production  
for BFI, Film4,  
Screen Yorkshire and  
Creative Scotland  
in association  
with NonStop  
Entertainment  
AB and Madman  
Entertainment Pty Ltd  
Made with the  
support of  
Screen Yorkshire  
Production Fund  
Supported by the  
National Lottery

through Creative  
Scotland  
Developed with the  
assistance of Film4  
**Executive Producers**  
Robin Gutch  
Mark Herbert  
Katherine Butler  
Hugo Heppell  
Lizzie Francke

**Cast**  
**George MacKay**  
Aaron  
**Kate Dickie**

Cathy  
**Nichola Burley**  
Jane  
**Michael Smiley**  
Frank  
**Sharon Mackenzie**  
Iris  
**Conor McCarron**  
Billy  
**Jordan Young**  
Michael  
**Colin Dempster**  
Priest  
**Carson James**  
Mullen  
young Aaron

**Noah Irvine**  
young Michael  
**Debbie Dorward**  
Moira  
**Andrew Marley**  
Andrew

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**

**Distributor**  
Soda Pictures

Scotland, present day. Aaron is the sole survivor of a mysterious fishing accident. In the village where he lives, he is regarded with hostility and suspicion. The families of the victims can't understand how he managed to stay alive. Aaron has no memory of what happened. His mother Cathy tries to support him but his mental state deteriorates. He seems convinced that his older brother Michael, who was on board the boat, isn't yet dead. He has strange apocalyptic notions about a devilish presence in the ocean that

has swallowed wrongdoers. Michael's girlfriend Jane is sympathetic towards Aaron but her father regards him as an outcast, as do the teenagers in the village. They taunt and mock him. He reacts by almost drowning one of them. Aaron himself is caught in a fishing boat's net and delivered back to his mother. She prepares to have him institutionalised. Aaron escapes and swims out to sea, carrying a knife. He cuts at his neck and throat as if trying to give himself gills. Cathy and the other villagers find the bloodied carcass of a whale on the beach.



## The Great Beauty

Italy/France 2013  
Director: Paolo Sorrentino  
Certificate 15 141m 3s

See Feature  
on page 38

### Reviewed by Roger Clarke

After filming in the US and Ireland for his 'Hollywood' movie *This Must Be the Place* (2011) with Sean Penn, Paolo Sorrentino has returned to his native Italy for a stupendous great gulp of Italian cinema. *The Great Beauty* makes a thematic trilogy after *The Consequences of Love* (2004) and *Il divo* (2008), his two best-known films, also starring his regular lead Toni Servillo.

Here, a lugubrious, playful Servillo plays Jep Gambardella, a well-connected *flâneur* and journalist hosting party after party for the upper echelons of Roman society, and at the same time pining for a lost teenage love. As ever when working with Sorrentino, Servillo embodies a kind of mummified representative of power. In the Oscar-nominated *Il divo* he played Italian politician Giulio Andreotti; in *The Consequences of Love* he was a hangdog Mafioso who curiously, by means of a plot device, must avoid real life at all costs, especially real life represented by a woman he might love.

The influences of *The Great Beauty* are worn on its Gucci sleeve – the Fellini of *La dolce vita* (1960) and the Antonioni of *La notte* (1961). Yet this isn't the 1960s bourgeoisie deliquescing into their own emptiness – this is the vaunting pleasure of the modern 'one per cent' revelling in unapologetic wealth. Gambardella is a kind of guide to an underworld, or alternate world – this has a heritage dating back to Dante – and clearly his role is an echo of Marcello Mastroianni in *La dolce vita*. No effort is spared to caress, visually, the statuary and stones and fountains and marble interiors of Rome, much as Antonioni did,

physically, with frail hands, in his final short film.

*The Great Beauty* opens with forgivable cliché. It's a scene of tourists on a hill overlooking the cityscape of Rome – a Japanese man faints from the sheer beauty of what he is seeing. The film then cuts to Gambardella's 65th birthday party at night, pulsating with beautiful people. On his way home he notices a religious school and nuns at work, getting up even as he goes to bed. It's an image of refreshment and youth, in cool cloisters and lush gardens, which he rejects.

Every now and again we get flashbacks to Gambardella aged 18, with the girl he truly loved. As he falls asleep he glimpses on the ceiling above his bed the same blue sea that incorporates a primal memory of a day spent together, her looking out as he swims alone in the cerulean waters and shouting a warning as a speedboat heedlessly approaches (he must be thankful it wasn't driven by Alain Delon). Early in the film Gambardella meets the husband of his lost love, who brings news of her death, which visibly shakes him. Perhaps, the viewer is tempted to suppose, something is about to give. Having spent 40 years trying to get away from the youthful success of his novel *The Human Apparatus*, is he about to renounce the *Vanity Fair*-style interviewing and return to his naked talent, or was that all he ever had in him?

The ensemble cast are all excellent. The script, when it is allowed to flourish and speak over the exuberant visuals, is also good – there's one bravura scene when the smooth-talking Gambardella does such a perfect take-down of an uppity (female) fellow author that she has to leave the party immediately. The camera swoops, glides and turns upside down, the



Dodging the brickbats: Chadwick Boseman

through the mess of mid-century America.

But as it is Helgeland is a company soldier, and his version of Robinson's story, while maintaining the steady anti-bigotry drumbeat, bears the tiresome fingerprints of Hollywood's current creative crutch: Blake Snyder's book *Save the Cat!*, which gives screenwriters a fairly precise and rigid 15-beat story formula and on which every ostensible blockbuster (from *The Dark Knight* to *Battleship* to *Star Trek into Darkness*) must now be based. Retracing Robinson's life story in the same shape as Batman's and Captain Kirk's, just as Steven Spielberg once treated dinosaurs and African slaves with the same carnival-ride esprit, may be the final insult. Ⓢ

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Thomas Tull  
**Written by**  
Brian Helgeland  
**Director of Photography**  
Don Burgess

**Edited by**  
Kevin Stitt  
Peter McNulty

**Production Designer**  
Richard Hoover

**Music**  
Mark Isham

**Production Sound Mixer**  
Jeffrey S. Wexler

**Costume Designer**  
Caroline Harris

©Legend Pictures, LLC  
**Production Companies**  
Warner Bros. Pictures and Legendary Pictures present a Legendary Pictures production  
A Brian Helgeland film

#### Executive Producers

Dick Cook  
Jon Jashni  
Jason Clark

#### Cast

**Chadwick Boseman**  
Jackie Robinson  
**Harrison Ford**  
Branch Rickey  
**Nicole Beharie**  
Rachel Robinson  
**Christopher Meloni**  
Leo Durocher  
**Andre Holland**  
Wendell Smith  
**Lucas Black**  
Pee Wee Reese  
**Hamish Linklater**  
Ralph Branca  
**Ryan Merriman**  
Dixie Walker  
**Alan Tudyk**  
Ben Chapman  
**T.R. Knight**  
Harold Parrott  
**John C. McGinley**  
Red Barber  
**Toby Huss**  
Clyde Sukeforth

**Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]**

**Distributor**  
Warner Bros Distributors (UK)


11,524 ft +8 frames

Post-war US. Brooklyn Dodgers executive Branch Rickey decides, for what he says are commercial reasons, to recruit African-American player Jackie Robinson from the Negro Leagues. By joining the majors, Robinson becomes the first black player to break baseball's 'colour line'. He faces resistance and bigotry both on and off the field, but is made to understand that if he fights back, the cause will be lost. He weathers verbal abuse and suffers resistance even from his own teammates, some of whom ask to be traded rather play that with a black man. Robinson and his wife Rachel have a baby. As the 1947 season progresses, Rickey battles a tide of racism, but by playing well Robinson slowly accrues the respect of the Dodgers and baseball fans everywhere.



When in Rome: Galatea Ranzi, Toni Servillo

music, composed and co-opted, never far away. Frames are immaculately composed, the lighting is richly realised, the colours and even the shadows exquisite to look at. This is Rome without its poor or its famous dark side; the Vatican looms large at the very end, when a Mother Teresa-type figure makes a surprise intervention into Gambarella's inner self. In a deft bit of satiric characterisation, a cardinal, in line for the throne of St Peter and to boot a famous exorcist, does nothing but discuss recipes.

As a take on the papacy it's a little more playful than something Marco Bellocchio would do in, say, *My Mother's Smile* (sadly undistributed in the UK) from 2002, but it serves a purpose. A criticism might be that it both celebrates and critiques a spiritually vacant, vacuous existence, both having its *panforte* and eating it, but a not dissimilar thing was said about *La dolce vita* when it first came out. However, the brimful virtuosity on show here, the sheer pleasure in cinema, is hard to argue with, even if you are more inclined to the cinema of Pasolini than Fellini, as this reviewer confesses. 

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Nicola Giuliano  
Francesca Cima  
**Screenplay**  
Paolo Sorrentino  
Umberto Contarelllo  
**Story**  
Paolo Sorrentino  
**Director of Photography**  
Luca Bigazzi  
**Editor**  
Cristiano Travaglioli  
**Production Designer**  
Stefania Cella  
**Music**  
Lele Marchitelli  
**Sound**  
Emanuele Cecere  
**Costume Designer**  
Daniela Ciano

©Indigo Film,  
Babe Films, Pathé  
Production, France  
2 Cinéma  
**Production Companies**  
An Indigo Film  
production in  
collaboration with  
Medusa Film  
In co-production with  
Babe Films, Pathé,  
France 2 Cinéma  
Developed with the  
support of the MEDIA  
Programme of the

European Union  
In association with  
Banca Popolare  
di Vicenza in  
accordance with tax  
credit regulations  
With the support  
of Eurimages  
With the contribution  
of Ministero per i  
Beni e le Attività  
Culturali - Direzione  
Generale per  
il Cinema  
Produced with  
the support of  
Regione Lazio  
Fondo Regionale  
per il Cinema e  
l'Audiovisivo  
In collaboration with  
Mediaset Premium  
With the  
participation of  
Canal+ Ciné+,  
France Télévisions  
**Executive Producer**  
Viola Prestieri

**Cast**  
**Toni Servillo**  
Jep Gambardella  
**Carlo Verdone**  
Romano  
**Sabrina Ferilli**  
Ramona  
**Carlo Buccicchio**  
Lello Cava

**laia Forte**  
Trumeau  
**Pamela Villoresi**  
Viola  
**Galatea Ranzi**  
Stefania  
**Franco Graziosi**

**Giorgio Pasotti**  
**Massimo Popolizio**  
**Sonia Gessner**  
Sister Maria  
**Anna Della Rosa**

**Luca Marinelli**

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
**[2.35:1]**  
**Subtitles**

**Distributor**  
Artificial Eye  
Film Company

**12,694 ft +8 frames**

Italian theatrical title  
**La grande bellezza**

Rome, present day. A Japanese tourist faints while photographing the cityscape from the Janiculum Hill. We cut to late night at a glamorous 65th birthday party; the host is Jep Gambardella, an influential journalist who is voyeuristic, detached and amused by the cavortings of his wealthy guests. We learn that 40 years earlier he wrote a brilliant debut novel. He is haunted by his past: a lost love who, he discovers, has recently died. There are more parties, visits to restaurants and night-time walks through empty streets. Gambardella weeps at the funeral of his friend's son but this is a rare crack in his sleek carapace. Soon members of the church begin to appear at his social occasions – a cardinal tipped for the papacy, and then a living saint who ends up sleeping on his bedroom floor. Finally there is an intimation that Gambardella may write another book.

## Hannah Arendt

Germany/Luxembourg/France/Israel 2012  
Director: Margarethe von Trotta



Thought in action: Barbara Sukowa

### Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

German director and former Fassbinder muse Margarethe von Trotta has long insisted that she is not a feminist filmmaker but a filmmaker who happens to be female. Yet from her debut collaboration with her then husband Volker Schlöndorff, *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* (1975), through her fictionalised portrait of Gudrun Ensslin, *Marianne and Juliane* (1981), to her 2003 tale of a Jewish New Yorker's search for her roots, *Rosenstraße*, she has forged a career based on dramas that examine events in German history through their specific impact on women's lives. It's perhaps fitting, then, that although she describes the subject of her latest biopic as "the

opposite of a feminist", it is first and foremost as a woman that von Trotta's Hannah Arendt emerges.

A self-described political theorist famously concerned with the question of evil, Arendt (played here by von Trotta's regular collaborator Barbara Sukowa) came under fire from the likes of Adrienne Rich during the 1960s and 1970s for failing to address "the woman question". But as she insists here to her friend Kurt Blumenfeld, her allegiances were never to groups, but only to "friends".

The film makes much of her capacity for friendship and forgiveness. At its heart is Arendt's relationship with novelist Mary McCarthy, played with ferocious wit and warmth by

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Bettina Brokemper  
Johannes Rexin  
**Screenplay**  
Pam Katz  
Margarethe von Trotta  
**Director of Photography**  
Caroline Champetier  
**Editor**  
Bettina Böhler  
**Production Design**  
Volker Schaefer  
**Original Music**  
André Mergenthaler  
**Sound Recordist**  
Michael Busch

**Costume Design**  
Frauke Firl  
©Heimatfilm GmbH  
+ Co KG, Amour Fou  
Luxembourg SARL,  
MACT Productions  
SA, Metro  
Communications Ltd  
**Production Companies**  
Heimatfilm co-produced by Amour Fou Luxembourg, MACT Productions, Sophie du Lac Productions, Metro

Communications,  
ARD Degeto,  
Bayerischer Rundfunk,  
Westdeutscher Rundfunk  
Funded by Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, FFF Bayern, Filmförderungsanstalt, Deutscher Filmförderfonds, Film Fund Luxembourg, Eurimages, Media i2i Audiovisual, CNC, Israel Film Fund, Jerusalem Film &

Television Fund  
A Heimatfilm production  
In co-production with Amour Fou Luxembourg, MACT Productions, Metro Communications

**Cast**  
**Barbara Sukowa**  
Hannah Arendt  
**Axel Milberg**  
Heinrich Blücher  
**Janet McTeer**  
Mary McCarthy

**Julia Jentsch**  
Lotte Köhler  
**Ulrich Noethen**  
Hans Jonas  
**Michael Degen**  
Kurt Blumenfeld  
**Nicholas Woodeson**  
William Shawn  
**Sascha Ley**  
Lore Jonas  
**Victoria Trauttmansdorff**  
Charlotte Beradt  
**Friederike Becht**  
young Hannah Arendt  
**Klaus Pohl**  
Martin Heidegger

**Megan Gay**  
Frances Wells  
**Tom Leick**  
Jonathan Schell  
**Harvey Friedman**  
Thomas Miller

**Dolby Digital**  
**In Colour**  
**[2.35:1]**  
**Part-subtitled**

**Distributor**  
Soda Pictures

Jerusalem, 1961. Following his arrest by Israel's Mossad secret service, Nazi Adolf Eichmann is to be tried for war crimes. Exiled German-Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt is commissioned to write a series of articles about the trial for 'The New Yorker' magazine. Her old friend Hans Jonas and husband Heinrich Blücher are wary about the assignment but Arendt nonetheless travels to Jerusalem, where she is reunited with Zionist Kurt Blumenfeld.

During the trial, Arendt is struck by Eichmann's slavish obedience to the rules of the Nazi regime, and unsettled by the 'show trial' nature of proceedings. She expresses these views in the 300-page report she files on her return. She also claims that some Jewish leaders were compliant with the Nazis. As a

result the magazine is bombarded with complaints and Arendt is ostracised. Certain friends – notably the novelist Mary McCarthy and her assistant Lotte – stand by Hannah, but Hans and Kurt both turn their backs on her, disappointed at what they perceive to be a betrayal of their people. Arendt's youthful affair with the infamous Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger is cited by opponents as further evidence that she is a "self-hating Jew".

After a period of exile in the countryside, Arendt is moved to defend her thesis on the 'banality of evil' at a public lecture, although it does little to quell public hatred of her. A title tells us that the nature of evil remained a central concern of Arendt's philosophy until her death in 1975.



## Harrigan

United Kingdom 2013  
Director: Vince Woods  
Certificate 15 97m 26s

### Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Since the BBC broadcast *Life on Mars* in January 2006, the 1970s-set British crime thriller has become all but ubiquitous. David Peace's *Red Riding* was filmed in 2009, Ian Merrick's long-forgotten *The Black Panther* (1977) was disinterred in 2012, and *The Sweeney* was remade in the same year, alongside the reissuing of the original series on Blu-ray, offering a fetishistically tactile experience compared with the original ITV broadcasts.


So if Vince Woods's feature debut seems to be cynically clambering on to an already overloaded bandwagon, that's understandable but also a little unfair. Former detective Arthur McKenzie's script was actually written in the mid-1990s, based on his experiences in Newcastle upon Tyne and Hong Kong. McKenzie was on set to ensure that the period details were spot-on – particularly the logistical challenges of police work at a time (January 1974) of widespread social unrest, regular power cuts and no more sophisticated technology than a telephone and a police radio. Commendably, Woods resists milking easy laughs from the decade's surface trappings – so much so that occasional nudge-nudge moments (a domestic abuser burning his victim's bra, the kung-fu quips that greet Harrigan's colleague Lau) stick out like sore thumbs. Another cliché, though, is easier to excuse: there really are few things scarier than a jolly clown mask, especially when worn by a one-eyed psychopath.

The story of tough cop Barry Harrigan returning to his grim-up-north former patch to challenge crooks, hidebound colleagues and corrupt local politicians is decidedly familiar, and there are no real narrative surprises. However, Woods keeps it compulsively watchable thanks to well-chosen locations, James McAleer's Scope camerawork and a keen awareness of the situation's visual and dramatic potential. The police interrogation room is sometimes necessarily lit by oil lamps, the flickering shadows lending a decidedly gothic ambience that chimes well with the use



Street cleaner: Stephen Tompkinson

of *Treasure Island*-style 'black spot' messages later on. When Harrigan paints the outside of his newly reopened section house matt black, it becomes a forbiddingly monolithic fortress, with 'POLICE STATION OPEN' graffitied in blood-red letters (Woods admits that this was a conscious homage to Clint Eastwood's *High Plains Drifter*).

Stephen Tompkinson is wholly convincing as the greying, outwardly hard-as-nails Harrigan (beset by PTSD-style flashbacks to a traumatic time in Hong Kong), whose premature loss of his wife and daughter, to whom he still writes emotional letters, has made him particularly protective towards the other women in his life, such as his much abused colleague Bridie or burglary/rape victim Vicky – naturally, Harrigan's colleagues are crude sexists to a man. His sensitive resolution of a hostage situation involving seven-foot Ronnie (former basketball player Ian Whyte) pays dividends in the siege-driven climax. If the latter shamelessly steals from *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976), John Carpenter in turn borrowed from *Rio Bravo* (1959), and it's not hard to imagine *Harrigan* being convincingly relocated to a Wyoming frontier town, lock, stock and still-smoking barrel. 

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Kirsty Bell  
Vince Woods  
**Written by**  
Arthur McKenzie  
Created by Arthur McKenzie  
**Director of Photography**  
James McAleer  
**Editor**  
Michael Pentney  
**Production Designer**

Sarah Beaman  
**Original Score Composed by**  
James Edward Barker  
**Sound Recordist**  
Stuart Wright  
**Costume Designer**  
Camille Benda  
  
©Tall Tree Pictures  
**Production Companies**  
Co-financed by Rivers

Capital Finance on behalf of the Finance for Business North East Angel Fund  
**Executive Producers**  
Paul Rogers  
Stephen Tompkinson  
Robbie Elliott  
Rivers Capital Limited  
Mary Woods

**Cast**  
**Stephen Tompkinson**  
Detective Sergeant Barry Harrigan  
**Gillian Kearney**  
Bridie Wheland  
**Ronnie Fox**  
Cole  
**Darren Morfitt**  
Swift  
**Mark Stobbart**  
Larson

**Amy Manson**  
Vicky Frizzell  
**Maurice Roëves**  
Billy  
**Bill Fellows**  
Moss  
**Jamie Cho**  
Lau  
**Ian Whyte**  
Ronnie  
**John Bowler**  
Vincent Jenkins

**Dolby Digital In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
Tall Tree Distribution Limited/High Fliers Distribution

8,769 ft +0 frames

**Northern England, January 1974.** Detective Sergeant Barry Harrigan returns home after a Hong Kong secondment, and hears from his colleagues Billy (retired) and Frankie that the place has become a hell-hole, with Monkshire district residents tormented by Dunstan, Cole and their henchmen. After Dunstan threatens single mother Vicky and her flat is burgled by Cole's teenage sons, Harrigan promises a wholesale clean-up, despite his superior Larson's budget-driven objections. Cole and Dunstan order petty criminal Whopper to burgle local councillor Vince Jenkins, but he interrupts a Masonic meeting and is beaten up prior to his arrest. Dunstan rapes Vicky within earshot of her son Jason. When the hitherto gentle giant Ronnie kidnaps his baby son from his mother-


in-law and hides out in a church threatening to kill them both, Harrigan negotiates a solution. Jason is accidentally knocked down and killed by Cole's sons. Harrigan gives Vicky a guard dog. Cole and Dunstan kill Whopper. Billy's house is burgled, and he attacks Cole's sons before their arrest. Cole bails them, and kills Billy. Larson promises to support Harrigan if he can find more witnesses and evidence. The Monkshire section house is reopened, and Cole is arrested and held there. It is swiftly besieged by Dunstan's mob. Dunstan captures Harrigan's colleague Moss and threatens him with Billy's shotgun. Gambling that it's still loaded with blanks, Harrigan overpowers Dunstan, with the help of last-minute arrivals Ronnie, Vicky and her dog. Harrigan visits his wife and daughter's grave.

Janet McTeer. It opens in earnest with the pair engaged in a terrifically acerbic debate about their respective lovers, and later we watch the two fiftysomethings shoot pool, swig beer and gossip about the sexual performance of Martin Heidegger (Arendt's one-time lover, as we learn in a series of flashbacks). It will be McCarthy and her assistant Lotte Köhler who rally to Arendt's defence when she has alienated the longtime allies with whom she grew up.

It's a heartening picture of female solidarity. However, von Trotta's insistence on showing us Arendt as a friend and – via her marriage to philosopher Heinrich Blücher – lover, does not undermine her intellectual achievements. A tight focus on the period between 1961 and 1964, when Arendt was writing about the trial of Nazi SS leader Adolf Eichmann, emphasises the intersections between the personal and political while acting as an excellent primer on Arendt's famous coinage, the "banality of evil". For Arendt, Eichmann was "not Mephisto": far from it, his very ordinariness revealed the murder of 6 million as an act of bureaucracy committed by dim-witted administrators.

Today these views seem commonplace; at the time, coupled with an accusation of complicity on the part of some Jewish leaders, they caused outrage among many of Arendt's colleagues and friends. Her answer to their accusations of self-hatred and Nazi-loving is here condensed into an astonishing seven-minute soliloquy, when she explains that in her view Eichmann's guilt was above all the abdication of his right to think, and therefore anyone who at any time, in any place, forfeits the right to autonomy can be just as culpable of evil. Arendt's position is thus revealed as deeply personal, bound up not only with her own Jewish identity, her detention in Europe and relationship with the secular German intelligentsia, but above all with the passionately held view that it is only the act of thinking that separates us from Eichmann.

The film's construction is a superficially stolid, polished and glossy evocation of the 1960s New York intellectual scene, but it is remarkably suited to purpose. Von Trotta and her (mostly female) collaborators offer a portrait of Arendt as a woman who thinks – the camera keeping a watchful, respectful distance from Sukowa's delicate, unreadable features as she smokes and ponders – and DP Caroline Champetier and editor Bettina Böhler steer clear of visual theatrics. Take the editing of archive footage of Eichmann into the courtroom scenes, for example – no dramatic recreation could have captured the "mediocrity of the man" as eloquently as the beaky, bespectacled figure swiping at his snotty nose with a hanky as his litany of crimes is read out.

During his trial, Eichmann was boxed into a glass cage for his own protection. Hannah, too, becomes increasingly isolated as the film progresses and she finds herself on up a podium, locked behind a screen. At the film's close, we see her sandwiched between the glass doors of her splendid apartment, exiled once more with only her thoughts and her ever-present cigarette for company. As Heidegger warned the youthful Arendt so many years earlier, "Thinking is a lonely business." 

## Hawking

Director: Stephen Finnigan  
Certificate PG 88m 30s

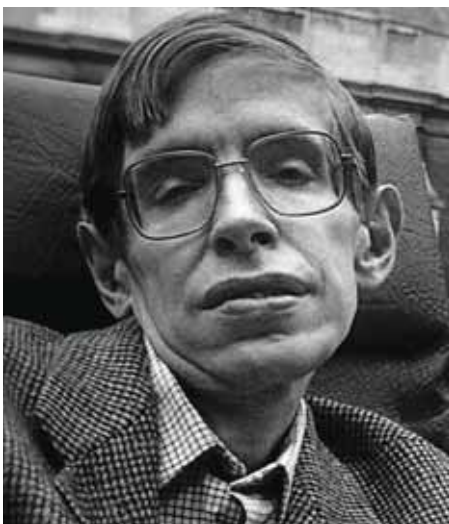
### Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Arguably as famous for his disability as for his scientific discoveries, Professor Stephen Hawking has already been the subject of at least two feature-length films. Errol Morris's 1991 documentary *A Brief History of Time* took its title from Hawking's bestselling book of popular science but seemed as fascinated by the man himself as by his theories; and Phillip Martin's 2004 BBC biopic opted for melodrama, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as the young cosmologist and concentrating on the early 1960s, when Hawking was finishing his PhD, falling in love and facing the diagnosis of motor neurone disease. In this 'autobiographical' documentary directed and co-written by Stephen Finnigan, Hawking himself sets out to offer "a personal journey through my life, told in my own words". As the film goes on to demonstrate, that life has been "very strange" but also "a lot of fun".

Indeed, the Hawking who emerges here is a social butterfly first, scientist second. A somewhat callow, cocky young man, he was nicknamed 'Einstein' for his quick wit rather than for his somewhat middling academic prowess, and at Oxford only worked for an hour a day, preferring to spend his time partying or coxing college rowing. Photographs show him looking dandyish in boater and linen suit, all floppy fringe and smug grin. It took a pair of almighty falls – in love with a young woman named Jane Wilde, and down some stairs and into a hospital bed, where he was given two years to live – for Hawking to apply himself.

Now Hawking's ex-wife, Wilde features heavily in the film and speaks with great fondness of her former husband. The collapse of the pair's marriage, rather than his illness, appears to be the great sadness of Hawking's life. "We were going to change the world," Wilde tells us – but soon she found herself sharing the marriage with the twin goddesses of physics and fame. Hawking's second marriage, to nurse Elaine Mason, likewise collapsed, and the ensuing tabloid headlines provoke the only hint of bitterness we see from Hawking. Perhaps because of this brush with the less savoury side of celebrity, Hawking's three children are a glaring absence in a film bursting with interviews, archive footage and family photographs.

Of course, any self-portrait is always partial, and DP Paul F. Jenkins's elegant photography even suggests a certain myopia in Hawking's account: shots blur and fade around the edges, creating a dense, thickening atmosphere in



Social butterfly: Stephen Hawking

which nothing quite resolves. There's also a rather curious use of a fisheye lens, which may be a rather unsuccessful attempt to approximate Hawking's view of the world. But elsewhere the direction suggests the precise impossibility of such a task with a rather lovely use of empty tableaux – a table set up with tea and typewriter, a desk with papers strewn across it – implying that Hawking has just fled the room.

The subject himself seems to stay always just out of reach, perhaps because neither he nor the film dwells on any of the darker points raised. Here, for example, is Hawking on that terrible diagnosis: "I felt somewhat of a tragic character... I took to listening to Wagner." It's not that the filmmakers shy away from the grimmer details of what it is to live with motor neurone disease – the medication, machinery and general indignity – but unlike Neil Platt, the subject of Morag McKinnon and Emma Davie's recent documentary *I Am Breathing*, Hawking is in an extraordinary position: much of what is both fun and strange about his life stems from the surreal celebrity he's accrued. We see him guest-starring on *The Simpsons* and *Star Trek*, larking about with Jim Carrey, lecturing to packed-out amphitheatres. "If the number of champagne receptions one goes to is a measure of success," he quips, "then it would seem that I have made it." So who can blame him if he prefers to focus on the champagne rather than the spoon feeding it to him? **S**

## How I Live Now

United Kingdom/Canada 2013  
Director: Kevin Macdonald  
Certificate 15 100m 59s

### Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

*Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games* and *Twilight*, young-adult fiction series adapted into box-office winners, show the reliable attraction of a 'chosen' protagonist: an ordinary teenager singled out for an extraordinary destiny. Unlike Harry, Katniss and Bella, however, *How I Live Now's* protagonist Daisy has no special ability, training or powerful protectors. Sent from New York to her aunt's house in rural England after falling out with her father and stepmother, Daisy is a disaffected teenager whose piercings and ripped leggings disguise her fearful inner world.

Although she believes herself to be a curse – because her mother died when she was born – there's nothing magical about Daisy, nor about Eddie, her apparently psychic but just very attentive cousin. How she and her cousins deal with the extraordinary circumstances of a terrorist attack and civil war in England is as heroic and engaging as the more apocalyptic YA franchises. In particular, Saoirse Ronan's performance lifts Daisy from her stereotypical yet insipid brattishness into a more compelling, resourceful self, as she, like the film, is unleashed by the coming of war.

Where the book is a mood piece, in which the war is an impressionistic nightmare folded inside and leaking into love's young dream, Kevin Macdonald's film commits viscerally to the invasion and its effects. The last third of the film is seriously terrifying and terrifyingly serious: a teen *It Happened Here* with echoes of Cate Shortland's *Lore* in Daisy and youngest cousin Piper's fraught flight from their wartime billet to the family home.

Yet the opening idyll and emerging romance between Daisy and Eddie lack that same visceral commitment, formed instead from borrowed cinematic tropes: the Super-8-and-punk pre-credits of *Stealing Beauty*, the hawk from *Kes*, English folksong and lens-flare montages. The standoffish Daisy of the film seems coerced by Eddie, whereas in the book their encounter is mutual. It's hard not to imagine the fragile intensity that could have been had Thomas Vinterberg (originally mooted to direct) been at the helm.

The amplification of the war scenes seems determined by that hoary medium-specific argument: that film does exteriority better than interiority. From the small details of roadblock signs (the same reflective red-with-white typefaces as roadworks signs) to the staging of a night-time assault in the woods, Macdonald's vision is the equal of Alfonso Cuarón's in *Children of Men* (2006). Seeing it through Ronan's wide eyes, we are transfixed, terrified and engaged.

Macdonald's replacement for the book's first-person narration mistakes an inner voice for voices in one's head: in the first half of the film, Daisy is frequently assailed by a voiceover montage spouting self-help clichés and adolescent self-disparagement – which adds up to less than a fully realised self until Daisy swings into gun-toting action. That how she lives now is a quasi-restitution of the nuclear family, with herself, Eddie and Piper – as opposed to the meshed, messy alternative

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Stephen Finnigan  
**Written by**  
Stephen Hawking  
Stephen Finnigan  
Ben Bowie  
**Director of Photography**  
Paul F. Jenkins  
**Film Editor**  
Tim Lovell  
**Production Designer**  
Sharon Katanka  
**Original Music**  
Nick Powell

Alex Lee  
**Sound Designer**  
Richard Lambert  
**Production Companies**  
Vertigo Films present  
a Darlow Smithson  
production in  
co-production with  
PBS/Channel 4  
**Executive Producers**  
Ben Bowie  
David Glover  
Beth Hoppe

Allan Niblo  
**In Colour**  
**Distributor**  
Vertigo Films

**A documentary about Professor Stephen Hawking, narrated by Hawking himself. The film cuts between present-day footage of Hawking teaching, appearing on television and spending time with his family, and a historical account of his life. Hawking was studying for a PhD at Cambridge University in the 1960s when he was diagnosed with motor neurone disease; despite being given only two years to live, he went on to marry and have children, and to become the world's foremost cosmologist. Interviews with family, carers, colleagues and friends detail the effects of his illness on his personal life and the impact of his work on the field of science.**



## In a World...

USA 2013  
Director: Lake Bell  
Certificate 15 92m 49s

### Reviewed by Adam Nayman

*In a World...* begins as a documentary tribute to the late Don LaFontaine, the Duluth-born voice actor whose honeyed pipes introduced some 5,000 film trailers between 1976 and his death in 2008. But as the tributes to the man they called 'Thunder Throat' keep rolling over footage of LaFontaine at the mic, it gradually becomes apparent that the movie is blurring the lines between reality and fiction: the most gushing testimonial comes courtesy of one 'Sam Sotto', whom sharp-eyed viewers will recognise as character actor Fred Melamed, last seen – and heard – purring his way through a villainous role in the Coen brothers' *A Serious Man* (2009).

This mock-doc opening isn't really intended to wrong-foot the audience so much as establish that voiceover acting is a real professional discipline with its own iconic practitioners and entrenched hierarchies – even if its 'stars' are likely to spend their entire lives toiling in obscurity. Sam is now the reigning king of voiceover by default, but there's an up-and-comer about to stand in his way: his daughter Carol (Lake Bell), a freelance vocal coach who chases gigs in between sessions teaching Eva Longoria how to produce a convincing Cockney accent (it involves putting a cork between her teeth). Cash-strapped and spiritually parched from living in her father's shadow, Carol decides that she's going to try to go where no woman has gone before – the recording booth for a major Hollywood movie trailer.

The title of *In a World...* refers to the portentous scene-setting of classic blockbuster promo clips ("In a world... where freedom is history", for instance), but it's also true that the film creates its own plausibly self-contained universe – the funniest and most authentic showbiz microcosm since Starz's shortlived catering comedy *Party Down*. Credit goes to Bell, whose wonderful performance as an industry lifer is an extension of her similarly sterling contributions as writer-director. Not only has she found an original milieu for an ensemble



Trailing behind: Lake Bell

comedy – one that permits all sorts of self-reflexive in-jokes and celebrity cameos – but by writing herself such a likeable lead role she demonstrates precisely the sort of DIY initiative that her onscreen alter ego is gradually nudged towards by her friends and co-workers.

Bell is particularly funny in the early scenes, where Carol shows off her vocal mimicry, but she's impressively self-effacing as the movie goes on, ceding a lot of the screen time to gifted co-stars Michaela Watkins, Demetri Martin, Rob Corddry, Nick Offerman and Ken Marino, all of whom are typically excellent in sharply etched supporting roles. The simplicity of the film's plot – the big inter-gender/inter-generational conflict between Carol and her father – leaves plenty of breathing room for the cast to just bounce lines and looks off one another, which they do with the relaxed aplomb of an alt-comedy all-star team. There are no holes in this line-up. **S**



Nuclear family: Bird, Holland, Ronan, Mackay

family at the end of the book – is another failure of trust, a trite fantasy from which Daisy's voiceover distances us just as the voices in her head distanced us from the opening. Unintentionally but disquietingly, war and its heroic quests – not love – become the most vivid experience for Daisy, and for the film. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Andrew Ruhemann  
John Battsek  
Charles Steel  
Alasdair Flind  
**Screenplay**  
Jeremy Brock  
Penelope Skinner  
Tony Grisoni  
Based on the novel  
by Meg Rosoff  
**Director of  
Photography**  
Franz Lustig  
**Editor**  
Jinx Godfrey  
**Production  
Designer**  
Jacqueline  
Abrahams  
**Original Music**  
Jon Hopkins  
**Production  
Sound Mixer**  
Nigel Albermaniche  
**Costume Designer**  
Jane Petrie

**HILN Ltd  
Production  
Companies**  
Film4 and BFI  
present in  
association with  
Protagonist Pictures  
and Entertainment  
One a Cowboy  
Films and Passion  
Pictures production  
in association  
with Prospect  
Entertainment  
A Kevin  
Macdonald film  
Made with the  
support of Film4 and  
the BFI's Film Fund  
**Executive  
Producers**  
Tessa Ross  
Robert Walak  
Piers Wenger  
Nigel Williams

**Tom Holland**  
Isaac  
**Harley Bird**  
Piper  
**Anna Chancellor**  
aunt Penn  
**Danny McEvoy**  
Joe  
**Jonathan Rugman**  
news reporter  
**Corey Johnson**  
consular official  
**Darren Morfitt**  
Sergeant  
**Stella Gonet**  
Mrs McEvoy  
**Des McAleer**  
Major McEvoy

**Dolby Digital  
In Colour**

**Distributor**  
E1 Films

9,088 ft +8 frames

### Cast

**Saoirse Ronan**  
Daisy  
**George Mackay**  
Eddie

England, an alternate present. American teenager Daisy is met at Heathrow by her teenage cousin Isaac, who drives her to his family's farm in Wales. Aunt Penn, a negotiator, is trying to prevent a war, so Isaac, his older brother Eddie, younger sister Piper and neighbour Joe take charge of Daisy, whose fears about body image, germs and her new stepmother loom larger than the potential conflict or her attraction to Eddie. When Penn flies to Geneva, the cousins enjoy an idyllic freedom. A nuclear attack on London brings intense feelings: Daisy and Eddie become lovers. The British army arrives, hunting terrorists. Eddie and Isaac are sent to Gatesfield Farm, while Daisy and Piper are rehoused elsewhere as farm labourers – but before being separated, Daisy and Eddie promise to return. After seeing Joe shot by the invaders, Daisy and Piper escape, fleeing aerial attacks, plane crashes and marauding soldiers, before finding the remains of a massacre, including Isaac's body, at Gatesfield. Lost in the woods, Daisy and Piper spot Eddie's hawk, which leads them home. Piper is reunited with her dog, and Daisy with a wounded, silent Eddie. Electricity returns, and the family begins to heal.

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Eddie Vaisman  
Mark Roberts  
Lake Bell  
Jett Steiger  
**Written by**  
Lake Bell  
**Director of  
Photography**  
Seamus Tierney  
**Editor**  
Tom McArdle  
**Production Designer**  
Megan Fenton  
**Music**  
Ryan Miller  
**Sound**  
Matthew Nicolay  
Ken Pries  
**Costume Designer**  
Lindy McMichael

**Production  
Companies**  
A 3311 production in  
association with More  
Films and Team G  
A Lake Bell film  
**Executive Producers**  
Ross Jacobson

Sean O'Grady

### Cast

**Lake Bell**  
Carol Solomon  
**Demetri Martin**  
Louis  
**Fred Melamed**  
Sam Sotto  
**Rob Corddry**  
Moe  
**Michaela Watkins**  
Dani  
**Ken Marino**  
Gustav Warner  
**Nick Offerman**  
Heners  
**Tig Notaro**  
Cher  
**Alexandra Holden**  
Jamie  
**Geena Davis**  
Katherine Huling  
**Eva Longoria**  
Cameron Diaz

**Dolby Digital  
In Colour**

**Distributor**  
Sony Pictures  
Releasing

8,353 ft +8 frames

US, the present. The death of top voiceover artist Don LaFontaine has left a void in the world of movie-trailer narration. Savvy veteran Sam Sotto is grooming an heir apparent, Gustav. Meanwhile Sam's daughter Carol is selected to voice a trailer after she records a temporary vocal track. Carol and her sister Dani are tired of their father's arrogant self-regard, and suspicious of his much younger girlfriend Jamie. When Carol moves in with Dani, however, she discovers that the latter's marriage to homely editor Moe has its own problems. Carol's attempts to further her career are complicated by a one-night stand with Gustav, who doesn't realise that she is his mentor's daughter – or his rival for a coveted job voicing the trailer for upcoming blockbuster 'The Amazon Games'. Carol, Sam and Gustav all record auditions for the gig, and the winner is announced during an awards ceremony where Sam is being recognised for his lifetime achievement. When the trailer airs, everyone realises that Carol has got the job, which sends Sam into a jealous rage. Jamie shames him into controlling himself and being happy for his daughter. Carol is disappointed when she learns that the studio executive who hired her had a cynical agenda, but she goes on to expand her vocal coaching practice, teaching women how to speak more assertively.

## In the Name Of

Poland/France 2013  
Director: Małgoska Szumowska

### Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Małgoska Szumowska's fifth feature initially seems like a belated Polish response to Antonia Bird's *Priest* (1994), since it's also about a priest struggling to reconcile faith and homosexuality. But Szumowska's lower-key approach is both more focused (it lacks *Priest*'s parallel narrative about heterosexual incest) and more localised, since homosexuality is still a hot-button topic in Polish culture, especially when fused with religion. Depressingly, this was confirmed by sections of the local media in their response to the film (often sight unseen) – an unthinking bigotry echoed by the inhabitants of the unnamed rural community where the film is set.

Although there are many confessional conversations, none is held in a formal setting. Father Adam (Andrzej Chyra) has one-to-one chats with his juvenile delinquent charges in casual surroundings, his colleague Michał requests a formal confession in the open air, and Adam himself unburdens his heart to his expat sister, shown obliquely on a laptop screen (a hi-tech equivalent of the confessor lurking in his box). Adam is as likely to wear jeans as a cassock, and Michał Englert's handheld camerawork reflects this casualness. The film strips aside flummery and ritual, emphasising the good work the Catholic church can perform – if only it could come to terms with its hang-ups over sexuality and apply its exhortations to protect the vulnerable more consistently.

Chyra, a prolific actor best known internationally as the suicidal survivor in Andrzej Wajda's *Katyn* (2007) and the rapist in Szumowska's earlier *Elles* (2011), is the film's strongest suit: his intense, Terence Stamp-like gaze is peculiarly well suited to the material. The film often falls prey to self-conscious symbolism: Adam's beard and bearing make him an obvious Christ surrogate; at an early stage of his personal



Hidden desires: Kosciukiewicz, Chyra

Calvary he's shown dancing/wrestling with a portrait of Benedict XIV; and the growing mutual attraction between him and mute labourer Lukasz (Mateusz Kosciukiewicz) is demonstrated first by a calculatedly *pietà*-style composition and then by both men running through a cornfield gibbering and chest-thumping. Such moments, though memorable, work against the sensitivity and subtlety displayed elsewhere.

Szumowska's portrait of the Church is more nuanced than the popular caricature. Olgierd Lukaszewicz's avuncular bishop is relaxed about the news that Adam might be gay, although his sweep-it-under-the-carpet response is to transfer him (for the second time) to a different parish. But Adam is just as likely to favour cover-up over confrontation – when young Gajo confesses a homosexual past, Adam is so concerned not to appear a hypocrite that he does nothing, talking in platitudes rather than grasping nettles. Since this has long been the preferred position of the Polish film industry on the topic of homosexuality, in that respect Szumowska's film is a breakthrough. **B**

## InRealLife

United Kingdom 2013  
Director: Beeban Kidron

### Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

With so much mainstream news coverage about young people's use of the internet offering cautionary consideration of the (admittedly very real) questions of paedophile grooming and peer-group online bullying, it's certainly welcome that director Beeban Kidron's documentary approaches the generational digital divide with more of a listening attitude than pejorative disapproval. Her opening narration expresses her mixed feelings – shared by many who grew up before smartphones had even been conceived of – marvelling at the net's possibility for delivering “the whole promise of human creativity” while simultaneously being befuddled by the way it rules the lives of the tech-savvy young, and concerned by the complex interaction between private information and commercial ownership evolving in the online arena. It's relatively brief, but this opening voiceover kicks off the proceedings by suggesting that Kidron has actually set herself the task of data-wrangling enough material for at least three movies.

What follows is an always absorbing compilation of youthful testimony and expert opinion, interspersed with side trips to look at the buildings in London, New York and California where the actual wires converge and endless amounts of data are stored. This geographical element is only moderately fascinating but it does serve to get us away from the talking heads, whose sheer profusion is the film's undoing. A cavalcade of academic media specialists, software magnates, game designers, psychologists and even a doom-mongering Julian Assange asserting that Google knows more about you than your own mother does, come and go with dizzying frequency, as indeed do their sundry areas of expertise, from the moral and psychological impact of online porn to the self-perception issues of having your personality created by Amazon suggestions and Facebook likes, and the ongoing erosion of privacy by the vested interests of corporate behemoths. It's all worth hearing, but if Kidron set out on a fact-finding mission, her main discovery is that the internet revolution is such a many-headed hydra it resolutely defies easy encapsulation.

*InRealLife* is far more effective when Kidron simply sits down with young people and gets them to talk, since their responses offer the freshest and most revealing material here. One 15-year-old Londoner, for instance, is brazenly upfront about his daily online porn habit, yet somewhat touching when he explains how the desire to replicate these same sexual scenarios in his real-life relationships has effectively destroyed his chances of falling in love. Elsewhere, though, the most dramatically powerful moments are the darkest: distraught parents describe the suicide of their 14-year-old son after a campaign of online bullying, and a teenager from South London delivers a tale of suffering gang-rape to retrieve her smartphone from a group of attackers which is both harrowing and deeply telling about her fundamental need to remain connected.

In contrast, Kidron's allocation of considerable screen-time to a Morecambe teen who came out on Twitter and is planning a meet-up with his online boyfriend is an indication of

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Producer</b> Agnieszka Kurzydło	With the participation of Kino Świat	<b>Distributor</b> Peccadillo Pictures Ltd
<b>Screenplay</b> Małgoska Szumowska Michał Englert	<b>Cast</b> Andrzej Chyra Father Adam Mateusz Kosciukiewicz Lukasz, 'Humpty' Maja Ostaszewska Ewa Lukasz Simlat Michał, teacher Tomasz Schuchardt Adrian, 'Blondie' Maria Maj Humpty's mother Olgierd Lukaszewicz Bishop Kamil Adamowicz Rudy Mateusz Gajko Gajo Jakub Gentek Koko Daniel Swiderski Babun Mateusz Malczewski Mateusz	Polish theatrical title <b>W imię...</b>
<b>Director of Photography</b> Michał Englert		
<b>Editor</b> Jacek Drosio		
<b>Production Designer</b> Marek Zawierucha		
<b>Music</b> Paweł Mykietyn Adam Walicki		
<b>Sound</b> Maria Chłarea Krzysztof Stasiak Kacper Habisiak Marcin Kasinski		
<b>Costume Designers</b> Katarzyna Lewinska Julia Jarza-Brataniec		
<b>Production Companies</b> A Mental Disorder 4 production in co-production with SHOT – Szumowski, Zentropa International Poland, Canal+ Supported by Polish Film Institute		
	<b>Dolby Digital</b> <b>In Colour</b> <b>[2.35:1]</b> <b>Subtitles</b>	

Rural Poland, the present. Parish priest Father Adam runs a community centre for boys from troubled backgrounds with the support of local teacher Michał. Despite rigorously enforced discipline, tensions occasionally flare up between their charges and local farmhands, and also among each other, especially when Lukasz (known as 'Humpty'), a much abused mute with a pyromaniac past, joins their football games. After Lukasz is beaten up, Adam feels attracted to him. Michał's wife Ewa, who has been regularly plying Adam with culinary gifts, attempts to seduce him but is rebuffed. Adrian (aka 'Blondie') joins the centre, quickly earning the others' respect by his arm-wrestling prowess. Gajo confesses a homosexual past to Adam, who respects his confidence. Adam later stumbles on Adrian having sex with Gajo on the centre's sofa, and responds by giving it away to the poor. When Gajo is found hanged, Adrian circulates spoken and graffiti'd rumours about Adam's sexuality, and is beaten up by Lukasz. Driving past Adam's stationary car, Michał observes Adam getting intimate with Lukasz, and discusses his concerns with the bishop, who advises him to live and let live. After the bishop proposes to transfer Adam (previously transferred from Warsaw under a similar cloud), the latter confesses his sexuality to his expat sister during a drunken Skype conversation. Following Adam's departure, Lukasz burns the centre down. While working on a building site, Lukasz discovers Adam's whereabouts and tracks him down. Adam and Lukasz finally make love. Later, Lukasz joins a seminary.





Screen slaves: 'InRealLife'

faith in the ability of the young generation to mould communications technology to their own purposes. As such, it's the most hopeful element in the film, yet in no way a summation, since the disparate chorus of voices militates against any sort of unified reading. Funny, shocking, confusing, illuminating, grandiose and occasionally trivial, *InRealLife* in the end offers a similarly confounding experience to the online world that it has set out to understand. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Freya Sampson  
Beeban Kidron  
**Camera**  
Neil Harvey  
**Editor**  
David Charap  
**Sound Design**  
Ben Baird

©SKY/Soho Angel  
Films Ltd/British  
Film Institute  
**Production**

**Companies**  
Sky and British Film  
Institute present a  
Cross Street Films  
and Studio Lambert  
production of a  
Beeban Kidron Film  
Made with the  
support of the  
BFI's Film Fund  
**Executive  
Producers**  
Stephen Lambert  
Jo Crawley

Lizzie Francke  
Chris Wilson

**In Colour**

**Distributor**  
Dogwoof

Prompted by a desire to discover why young people seem to spend so much time on their smartphones and what effect this generational change in behaviour is having on them, director Beeban Kidron interviews British teenagers and American media academics and psychologists. We hear the testimony of one 15-year-old boy concerned about his daily immersion in online pornography, while a girl tells how she endured a gang-rape in the course of retrieving her precious phone from attackers. The harrowing recollections of parents whose 14-year-old son committed suicide after being subjected to online bullying are contrasted with the more positive experience of a teenage boy who found a boyfriend online. Expert commentaries concentrate on the psychological issues of setting normative patterns of behaviour in vulnerable young people, the question of privacy and the relationship between social networks and monetisation opportunities for commercial interests.

## Insidious Chapter 2

Director: James Wan  
Certificate 15 105m 28s

### Reviewed by Kim Newman

As the title suggests, this offers more of the same – picking up from the coda of *Insidious* (2011), in which family man Josh (Patrick Wilson) was possessed by a sinister old lady and murdered psychic Elise (Lin Shaye). Though this follow-up reveals that the wicked ghost is actually a Norman Bates-type male serial killer in old-lady drag, the script – by Leigh Whannell, who also takes a continuing role – develops from hints dropped last time round. Even though Shaye was killed off in the first film, her character can reappear as a ghost – and, in a remarkable bit of casting, in flashbacks featuring young Lin Shaye-lookalike Lindsay Seim – when the action hops between the haunted present day and a limbo of darkness, fog and random apparitions.

Having recently had another workout in *The Conjuring*, James Wan's favourite spook business seems a little less classical and more shopworn this time out. Again, sinister figures glide in the background, are glimpsed in mirrors, loom under sheets and make sudden snarly leaps, but giving the spectres more screen time diminishes their scare value. While this has a more logical through-line plot than Wan's *Dead Silence* (2007) or the original *Insidious*, it's also stripped of the eccentricity that made them alternately endearing and shivery. Naturally the last scene has the ghost Elise react to something as yet unseen with a gasp of "Oh my God" – promising a Chapter 3. **S**



Danielle Bisutti

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Jason Blum  
Oren Peli  
**Written by**  
Leigh Whannell  
From a story by  
James Wan  
**Director of  
Photography**  
John R. Leonetti  
**Editor**  
Kirk M. Morri  
**Production  
Designer**  
Jennifer Spence  
**Music**  
Joseph Bishara  
**Production  
Sound Mixer**  
Buck Robinson  
**Costume Designer**  
Kristin M. Burke

**Production  
Companies**  
Filmdistrict presents  
in association with

Stage 6 Films an  
Entertainment  
One presentation  
of a Blumhouse  
production  
A James Wan film  
**Executive  
Producers**  
Steven Schnieder  
Brian Kavanaugh-  
Jones  
Charles Layton  
Peter Schlessel  
Lia Buman  
Xavier Marchand  
Leigh Whannell

**Cast**  
**Patrick Wilson**  
Josh Lambert  
**Rose Byrne**  
Renai Lambert  
**Lin Shaye**  
Elise Rainier  
**Ty Simpkins**  
Dalton Lambert

**Barbara Hershey**  
Lorraine Lambert  
**Leigh Whannell**  
Specs  
**Andrew Astor**  
Foster Lambert  
**Angus Sampson**  
Tucker  
**Jocelin Donahue**  
young Lorraine  
Lambert  
**Danielle Bisutti**  
Michelle  
**Lindsay Seim**  
young Elise  
**Steve Coulter**  
Carl

**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
E1 Films

9,492 ft +0 frames

The US, the present. Having rescued his son Dalton from limbo, psychic Josh Lambert is possessed by mother-dominated serial killer Parker Crane and poses a threat to his wife Renai and their children. Realising that something is wrong, Josh's mother Lorraine consults psychic investigator Carl, who helped Josh as a child. Carl is wounded and finds himself in limbo, where Dalton and murdered psychic Elise find Josh's dispossessed spirit. Guided back to his body, Josh prevents Crane from killing his family.

## Jadoo

United Kingdom 2012  
Director: Amit Gupta  
Certificate 12A 83m 32s

### Reviewed by Naman Ramachandran

Amit Gupta could not have chosen a subject more removed from his debut feature *Resistance* (2011) for his next film. *Resistance* was a quiet, bleak, Wales-set drama against the backdrop of World War II. For *Jadoo* (meaning magic in Hindi), Gupta goes back to his roots, to the time when his family ran a restaurant in Leicester, and the result is a film that is bursting with colour.

Gupta's tale of a pair of estranged Indian chef/ restaurateur brothers, one of whom is adept at creating starters and the other a dab hand at cooking main courses (thanks to possessing different halves of the family recipe book), is a delight for curry lovers. Veteran cinematographer Roger Pratt displayed his mastery of shooting food in Lasse Hallström's *Chocolat* (2000), and in *Jadoo* he elevates his craft to the level of food porn – there won't be a silent belly in the house. In this, at least where films themed around Indian food are concerned, *Jadoo* is of a piece with David Kaplan's New York-set *Today's Special* (2009). It also shares a key cast member with Kaplan's film: the always-excellent Harish Patel (the life and soul of Nigel Cole's *All in Good Time*) played a restaurateur who suffered a heart attack in *Today's Special*; in *Jadoo*, he lives the key role of Raja, who also happens to be struck down by a heart ailment. The similarities end there, however. While *Today's Special* was about a thoroughly Westernised Indian chef being forced to embrace his roots in order to save the family restaurant from certain ruin, discovering himself in the process, *Jadoo* is a celebration of the South Asian family unit and also a paean to Leicester, highlighting the rhythms of the city's Golden Mile with some exuberance.

Unusually, *Jadoo* ends on a low key. The entire film has been a build-up to a big fat Indian wedding, and while Gupta shows admirable restraint in not finishing with a



Starters for ten: Amara Karan

full-on Indian party à la *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) or *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002), choosing rather to show a series of still images from the celebrations, we are left with a sense of anti-climax. It is commendable of Gupta to veer away from the usual Bollywood all-singing, all-dancing ending, but the genre and the lead-up demand a grand finale that *Jadoo* doesn't ultimately deliver, thus rendering it fractionally short of the magic promised in the title. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Producer</b> Amanda Faber Isabelle Georgeaux Richard Holmes Nikki Parrot <b>Written by</b> Armit Gupta based on his play for BBC Radio 4 <b>Director of Photography</b> Roger Pratt <b>Film Editor</b> Eddie Hamilton <b>Production Designer</b> Adrian Smith <b>Music</b> Stephen Warbeck <b>Production Sound Mixer</b> Malcolm Davies <b>Costume Designer</b> Nigel Egerton	Raja Chandana <b>Kulvinder Ghir</b> Jagi Chandana <b>Tom Mison</b> Mark <b>Madhur Jaffrey</b> herself <b>Adeel Akhtar</b> Vinod <b>Paul Bazely</b> Kirit <b>Adam Beresford</b> postman <b>Paul Bhattacharjee</b> Abdul <b>Antony Bunsee</b> Chandu <b>Paul Chowdhry</b> Kam <b>Sophiya Haque</b> Sarala Chandana <b>Tony Jayawardena</b> London chef <b>Aysha Kala</b> Seema Chandana <b>Kiran Landa</b> Preeti <b>Mike Noble</b> Pawel <b>Haseeb Noray</b> Sonu Chandana <b>Ray Panthaki</b> Rak Sharma <b>Nikesh Patel</b> Dee Chandana <b>Parvez Qadir</b> Jindar <b>Hardeep Singh Kohli</b> compere <b>Neil D'souza</b> London waiter <b>Harvey Virdi</b> Leelu Chandana <b>Shane Zaza</b>	Tarun  <b>Dolby In Colour [2.35:1]</b> <b>Part-subtitled</b>  <b>Distributor</b> Intandem Film Distribution Ltd  <b>7,518 ft +0 frames</b>
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© Jadoo Films Ltd.  
**Production Companies**  
Air Productions  
in association  
with Tigerlily  
Films presents  
**Executive Producers**  
Patrick Healy  
Walther Lovato  
Charles Peel  
Paula Powers  
Linus Wright

### Cast

**Amara Karan**  
Shalini Chandana  
**Harish Patel**

Leicester, the present. London-based lawyer Shalini Chandana returns to her hometown to inform her father Raja that she plans to marry outside the Indian community – she is engaged to Mark, a white doctor.

When Raja and his brother Jagi, formerly partners in a restaurant owned by their mother, fell out 20 years ago over a misunderstanding, the family recipe book was split between them. They then opened rival restaurants across the road from each other, with Raja (who got the half of the book with starters recipes) serving the best starters in town and Jagi (who got the mains half), the best main courses.

Unbeknown to Shalini, Mark arrives in Leicester and wins Raja's approval for the marriage. The date is set for the wedding. Shalini, who is on excellent terms with her estranged uncle and his family, is determined that the brothers should cook together for her wedding. When a cook-off hosted by Madhur Jaffrey comes to Leicester, Shalini convinces the warring brothers to enter the competition. The brothers reluctantly agree and after some initial skirmishes begin cooking as a team in preparation for the cook-off. During the competition, things go well for the brothers until Jaffrey asks them why they parted ways. Raja and Jagi argue; Raja has a heart attack on stage and is taken to hospital. Shalini tells Jagi that Raja is going to die and the brothers are tearfully reconciled.

## Justin and the Knights of Valour

Spain/Netherlands/United Kingdom 2013  
Director: Manuel Sicilia; Certificate PG 96m 15s

### Reviewed by Kate Stables

Spanish animator Manuel Sicilia's affable second feature is an improvement on 2008's *The Missing Lynx*. But this meandering medieval tale of a teenage wannabe knight can't capture the rollicking nerd-makes-good narrative of *How to Train Your Dragon* or the lush visuals and crisp comedy of the *Shrek* or *Kung Fu Panda* series, all of which it is visibly straining after.

An episodic story (by Sicilia and co-screenwriter Matthew Jacobs) alternates teen angst with swordplay, overpopulated by one-note characters. Producer Antonio Banderas's fake knight Sir Clorex, a ringer for *Beauty and the Beast*'s preening Gaston, is the worst example. But David Williams's split-personality wizard and Rupert Everett's dandy deputy-villain are thrown away in poorly integrated cameos. Freddie Highmore's hero has a self-deprecating charm, helped by the film's un-Hollywood willingness to let him fail knightly challenges. But now that *Epic* and *The Croods* have raised the bar for 3D action sequences, the bog-standard aerial acrobatics atop Gustav the flying crocodile simply don't cut it. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Produced by</b> Antonio Banderas Marcelino Almansa Ralph Kamp Kerry Fulton <b>Screenplay Written by</b> Manuel Sicilia Matthew Jacobs Based on an original idea by Manuel Sicilia, José E. Machuca Fernández, José Rozúa Lucena <b>Editor</b> Claudio Hernández <b>Art Directors</b> Oscar J. Vargas Esteban Martín <b>Music</b> Ilan Eshkeri <b>Sound Designer</b> Frederico Pajaro <b>Animation Directors</b> Francisco Fernández Dapena Gabriel García Poignet	In co-production with Aliwodd Mediterraneo Producciones Antonio Banderas presents a Kandor Graphics film With financing from Caja Granada, BMN, Triodos Bank, Bankinter With venture financing from Invercaria, JEREMIE, Inversiones Pro Granada With the support of Antena 3 With financing from ICO With the support of ICAA, SGR, Junta de Andalucía Agencia de Instituciones Consejería de Cultura y Deporte Timeless Films, Out of the Box <b>Executive Producers</b> Kerry Fulton Sarah Arnott Francesca Nicoll	<b>James Cosmo</b> Blucher <b>Charles Dance</b> Legantir <b>Tasmin Egerton</b> Lara <b>Rupert Everett</b> Sota <b>Barry Humphries</b> Braulio <b>Alfred Molina</b> Reginald <b>Mark Strong</b> Heraclio <b>David Williams</b> Melquiades <b>Julie Walters</b> gran <b>Olivia Williams</b> Queen <b>Saoirse Ronan</b> Talia  <b>In Colour [2.35:1]</b>  <b>Distributor</b> E! Films  <b>Some screenings presented in 3D</b>  <b>8,662 ft +8 frames</b>  Spanish theatrical title <i>Justin y la espada del valor</i>
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The medieval kingdom of Gabalonia. Shy teen Justin shuns law school for a knight's training with the decrepit Knights of Valour. (Knights have long been outlawed.) Failing his final knight-test, he returns home. His rich school friend Lara is kidnapped by fake knight Sir Clorex. Justin and feisty waitress Talia, aided by magician Melquiades, track Lara to the hideout of evil Sir Heraclio, who is plotting to take over the kingdom. Aided by Blucher, Justin's mentor, they roust Heraclio's forces. Heraclio falls to his death while fighting Justin. The mortally wounded Blucher is magically restored by a 'knight's touch' from Justin's hand. Knights are reinstated. Justin is reconciled with his lawyer father and knighted by the queen.

## Kick-Ass 2

USA/Japan 2013  
Director: Jeff Wadlow  
Certificate 15 102m 57s

### Reviewed by Anton Bitel

Like Peter Stebbings's *Defendor* (2009), James Gunn's *Super* (2010) and of course Matthew Vaughn's original *Kick-Ass* (2010), which all placed would-be superheroes and supervillains in a recognisably real world, *Kick-Ass 2* thrives on an overt self-awareness of all its most questionable qualities. If aspirant arch-nemesis Chris D'Amico (Christopher Mintz-Plasse) draws *noms de guerre* for his crew from uneasy racial stereotypes, he is expressly called out for that. If the maiming, sometimes murderous, justice meted out by the film's 'superheroes' is decidedly rough, even psychotic, that too is expressly thematised ("You're the fucking bad guys," our heroes are told – by a human trafficker!) while also being played for uncomfortable laughs. If 15-year-old Mindy (Chloë Grace Moretz) seems inappropriately sexualised, especially in her fetish get-up as Hit-Girl, paedophilia is duly referenced ("Fifteen gets you 20!"). If characters repeatedly insist, "This isn't a comic book," then the presentation of captions in corner boxes and subtitles in speech bubbles suggests otherwise – as does the adaptation from Mark Millar's graphic novel. Even the film's status as follow-up is brought into ironised focus. "If I was even thinking about a Kick-Ass sequel," comments Dave Lizewski (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) in voiceover, "I had to get serious" – and later he wears a shirt with the slogan 'I hate reboots'.

So these cake-eating hipster heroics are wilfully naughty, like a child constantly swearing for effect – and in case we miss the point, *Kick-Ass 2* has one of those too. "You're gonna need a bigger jar," says Mindy of the receptacle into which her guardian (Morris Chestnut) insists she pay money every time she cusses – and if her line sounds like a mangled reference to *Jaws* (1975), a man-eating shark will also later figure. As sadistically bloody as the original, this sequel from Jeff Wadlow (*Cry Wolf*, *Never Back Down*) once again glamorises its hyperviolence, deconstructs the glamorisation and glamorises the deconstruction. Whether all this postmodern knowingness immunises *Kick-Ass 2* against its own heavily foregrounded faults is down to the individual viewer, whom the film slyly aims to titillate and outrage in equal measure.

New here is a focus on adolescent rites of passage, and the desire to belong. Amid allusions to *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), *Heathers* (1989) and *Mean Girls* (2004), Mindy navigates the perils



A nod and a wink: Chloë Grace Moretz



# A Magnificent Haunting

Italy 2012

Director: Ferzan Ozpetek

## Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Turkish born, Italian domiciled, Ferzan Ozpetek sometimes comes across as a less abrasive (or less confrontational) version of François Ozon. In his films, as in the Frenchman's, characters encounter emotional, life-changing crises, in the course of which they often discover their true sexuality (submerged gay impulses, for the most part). But Ozpetek's films, lacking Ozon's edgy Gallic cool, are suffused with a gentle optimism that verges on sentimentality. Whatever crises arise, we can be sure they will eventually be surmounted and the ultimate outcome will be for the good.

Much of *A Magnificent Haunting's* appeal comes from the puppy-eyed charm of Elio Germano's Pietro, a would-be thesp from the provinces. Newly arrived in Rome, he's hopeless at auditions and fills in with night work as a pastry cook (also the profession of Giovanna, the heroine of Ozpetek's 2003 film *Facing Window*). Wistfully gay, Pietro talks of a boyfriend called Massimo, an assistant movie director, and once installed in his new apartment prepares an elaborate dinner for his supposed lover. But when Massimo shows up, he launches into a furious verbal attack, denouncing Pietro as a pathetic stalker who's bombarded him with hundreds of texts and emails on the strength of a single one-hour meeting three years ago, before storming out.

It's a brutally unexpected moment that briefly wrenches the film into a darker register, presenting Pietro as an inept, desperate fantasist, and suggesting that the ghostly acting troupe he soon finds infesting his apartment may be no more than projections he's dreamt up to avoid confronting his own inadequacy. But as if alarmed by these implications, Ozpetek reverts to the safer level of gentle whimsy; the benign theatrical phantoms happily wolf down the uneaten feast, and Massimo is never mentioned



Phantom troupe: 'A Magnificent Haunting'

again. And when a psychiatrist suggests just such a reading of the supposed ghosts, Ozpetek defuses the doctor's comments by portraying him as a patronising, self-satisfied ass.

The ghosts' backstory could also easily lend itself to powerful dramatic treatment: betrayed to the fascist authorities by their lead actress, forced to flee their theatre and collectively asphyxiated by a faulty heater in the apartment they now haunt. But they accept the revelation of their colleague's treachery – and the discovery that they've been phantoms for the past 69 years – with cheerful, shrugging equanimity, and gaily board a tram along with Pietro to return to the theatre they were chased out of in 1943; there they mount a performance for his eyes alone. This, and the mutually appreciative glances that Pietro has been exchanging with the hunky guy in the apartment downstairs, suggest that once again all will be well in Ozpetek's indulgently fairytale world. Still, *A Magnificent Haunting* is hard to dislike, the cinematic equivalent of a *zabaglione* – sweet, light, enjoyable and largely devoid of nourishment. **S**

## Credits and Synopsis

### Produced by

Matthew Vaughn  
Adam Bohling  
Tarquin Pack  
David Reid

### Screenplay

Jeff Wadlow  
Based on the comic books written by Mark Millar, John S. Romita Jr

### Director of Photography

Tim Maurice Jones

### Edited by

Eddie Hamilton

### Production Designer

Russell De Rozario

### Music

Composed by Henry Jackman  
Matthew Margeson

### Sound Design

Matt Collinge

### Costume Designer

Sammy Sheldon

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Differ

James O'Dee

©Universal Studios

### Production Companies

Universal Pictures  
and MARV Films

present a Matthew

Vaughn/Plan B

production

Presented in

association with

Dentsu Inc./

Fuji Television

Network, Inc.

### Executive Producers

Mark Millar

John S. Romita Jr

Stephen Marks

Claudia Vaughn

Pierre Lagrange

Trevor Duke Moretz

### Cast

Aaron Taylor-

Johnson

Dave Lizewski,

'Kick-Ass'

Christopher

Mintz-Plasse

Chris D'Amico, 'The

Motherfucker'

Chloë Grace Moretz

Mindy Macready,

'Hit Girl'

Jim Carrey

Colonel Stars

and Stripes

Morris Chestnut

Detective Marcus

Williams

Donald Faison

'Dr Gravity'

John Leguizamo

Javier

Claudia Lee

Brooke

Amy Anzel

Mrs Zane

Clark Duke

Marty, 'Battle Guy'

Augustus Prew

Todd, 'Ass Kicker'

### Dolby Digital/ Datasat

In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Distributor

Universal Pictures

International

UK & Eire

9,265 ft +8 frames

New York City, the present. High-school senior Dave Lizewski finds a renewed sense of purpose by teaming up again with ninth-grader Mindy Macready, as Kick-Ass and Hit-Girl. Caught in costume by her policeman guardian Marcus, Mindy promises to give up vigilantism. Dave turns to a team of costumed vigilantes ('Justice Forever') for companionship, while Mindy struggles against a clique of 'evil' girls at school. Meanwhile rich kid Chris D'Amico accidentally kills his own mother in a tantrum, and reinvents himself as supervillain The Motherfucker, assembling a crew of ex-cons and psychopaths to help avenge his late mobster father against Kick-Ass.

Chris's thugs attack members of Justice Forever as well as several policemen. The police retaliate by rounding up all masks. Dave's father pretends to be Kick-Ass and is arrested. After getting Dave to promise to abandon his costumed crusade, Mr Lizewski is murdered in the police lock-up by Chris's thugs. More thugs abduct Dave from the funeral but Mindy rescues him. In full costume, Mindy, Dave and an assembly of masked avengers confront Chris and his crew in Chris's lair. Dave tries to save his nemesis from a fall – but Chris, believing himself immortal, lets himself drop and is eaten by his own shark. Having killed six villains with a policeman's gun, Mindy becomes a fugitive after her 'first kiss' with Dave. Dave starts dedicating himself seriously to becoming a real hero. Chris survives, legless.

## Credits and Synopsis

### Produced by

Domenico Procacci

### Story/Screenplay

Federica Pontremoli

Ferzan Ozpetek

### Director of Photography

Maurizio Calvesi

### Editor

Walter Fasano

### Production Designer

Andrea Crisanti

### Music

Pasquale Catalano

### Sound Recordist

Marco Grillo

### Costume Designer

Alessandro Lai

©Fandango, Faros

### Production Companies

Domenico Procacci

presents a Fandango

and Faros production

with Rai Cinema

A film by Ferzan

Ozpetek

Made in association

with Intesa

Sanpaolo SpA

### Cast

Elio Germano

Pietro

### Margherita Buy

Lea Marri

Vittoria Puccini

Beatrice Marri

Giuseppe Fiorello

Filippo Verni

Paola Minaccioni

Maria

Cem Yilmaz

Yusuf Antep

Andrea Bosca

Luca Veroli

Claudia Potenza

Elena Masci

Ambrogio Maestri

Ambrogio Dardini

Matteo Savino

Ivan

Bianca Nappi

Nina

Monica Nappo

Olga

Massimiliano Gallo

Dr Cuccurullo

Giorgio Marchesi

Massimo

Gea Martire

Gea

Gianluca Gori

Ennio

Anna Proclemer

Livia Morosini

### Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Subtitles

Distributor

Peccadillo

Pictures Ltd

Italian theatrical title

Magnifica presenza

Rome, present day. Pietro, a young man recently arrived from Catania and hoping to become an actor, works nights in a bakery and shares an apartment with his controlling cousin Maria. Desperate for a place of his own, he rents a ramshackle old apartment, despite Maria's misgivings, and does it up. But soon he starts hearing strange sounds and voices, and then catches glimpses of mysterious figures. They manifest themselves and speak to him: four men, three women and a small boy, formally dressed and in stage makeup. It emerges that they're the members of the Apollonio troupe, a company of stage actors who vanished mysteriously during WWII; although they are ghosts, they have no idea that they're dead.

Initially irritated by the actors' presence in his apartment, Pietro gradually comes to enjoy their society. Maria, unable to see them, takes her cousin to a psychiatrist, who treats him as a fantasist. The actors explain that they came under suspicion for links with anti-fascist partisans and had to flee the theatre where they were performing; they are worried about their star actress, Livia Morosini, who vanished at the time they fled. Pietro tracks down the now elderly Livia, who admits that she betrayed her colleagues for the sake of her own career. The others died in 1943, suffocated by a faulty gas heater in the apartment. Livia comes to the apartment and confesses. Realising what year it is and at last able to leave the apartment, the ghosts take Pietro to their theatre and put on a performance for him.

## Metro Manila

UK 2012

Director: Sean Ellis

### Reviewed by Ashley Clark

For roughly two-thirds of its running time, the immersive and atmospheric third feature from British director Sean Ellis slots neatly into the subgenre of films that depict ill-equipped hillbilly types struggling to adjust to the hurly-burly of busy metropolitan centres (think *Midnight Cowboy*). *Metro Manila* posits the 'city' as a carnivorous presence in its own right, bearing down on yokel-like subjects and offering them a stark challenge: fight or die. While the local tourist board might object to the film's representation of Manila as a ruthless neon cesspool, Ellis makes it clear that his film's perspective is filtered through the subjective experience of the naive Oscar (a slightly bland Jake Macapagal) and his family, who have come down from the rural north in search of more lucrative employment. Only when the city has fully corrupted their innocence (he becomes involved in crime, she undertakes debasing work in a sleazy club) does the film segue into a more conventional, if neatly plotted, heist thriller.

It would have been easy for Ellis to overdo the luridness here, but he should be commended for his restraint. Unlike, say, Brillante Mendoza's extremely difficult to watch *Kinatay* (2009) – which used the graphic state-conceived rape, torture and murder of a prostitute as a microcosm of institutional corruption in the Philippines – Ellis depicts the horrors visited on the family in a less explicit manner, emphasising the creeping insidiousness of financially motivated corruption. For example, exactly how Oscar's penniless wife Mai (Althea Vega) persuades a doctor to cure her daughter's chronic toothache is left to the imagination, but we can assume it will not have been by savoury means. Similarly, the casualness with which Mai's boss suggests she pimp out her nine-year-old daughter is all the more chilling for being so underplayed. In the film's most powerful sequence, Ellis crosscuts a scene of Mai being physically preyed on in a club by a lecherous westerner with shots of Oscar inexplicably bursting into a juddering crying



Something rotten: Jake Macapagal

jag while drinking with his new colleagues. It's a mite melodramatic but undeniably effective in the light of how sensitively Ellis observes the family's dynamic throughout.

Intriguingly, *Metro Manila* is bookended by haunting references to a real-life incident in Manila in 2000, in which a man named Reginald Chua hijacked a plane and died after jumping out with a parachute made of silk produced in his father's factory. The same story was also used as the basis for Filipino filmmaker Raymond Red's drama *Manila Skies* (2009, as yet unreleased in the UK). Both filmmakers clearly saw in the tragic tabloid-ready story an allegorical relevance to the extent of the widespread economic desperation in the Philippines, and both deserve credit for imbuing harrowing studies of quotidian hardship with a powerfully allusive and poetic dimension. 🍷

## Mister John

Republic of Ireland/Republic of Singapore/UK 2013

Directors: Christine Molloy, Joe Lawlor

Certificate 15 95m 10s

### Reviewed by Wally Hammond

Adopting a mood somewhere between existential minimalist drama and psychological thriller, this second feature marks something of a bold departure towards foreign fields and 'pure cinema' (and more expansive budgets) for husband-and-wife writing, directing and editing team of Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor, and away from the more theatrical, documentary and community-based work of their previous collaborations. It's an accomplished, admirable work but one that's hard to categorise or particularly warm to, not least because of its – and the filmmakers' – considerable self-denying ordinances.

The basic scenario – a protagonist's disorientation through the particular circumstances of a funeral visit (in this case, to Singapore) – is familiar enough. Also familiar is the idea of the threat to, and possible erosion of, moral principle for a 'hero' or 'heroine' placed in a situation of unusual sexual opportunity, be it through lone travel, temporary separation, accidental intimacy or – as here – all three. For some filmmakers (Lawrence Kasdan in 1988's *The Accidental Tourist*, for example) such a situation can offer a chance to explore the redefining or dissolution of identity; for others (such as Laurent Cantet in 2005's *Heading South*), to present an exposé of sexual tourism; and for yet others (a swelling host, from Bob Fosse to Just Jaeckin), to indulge in a voyeuristic dive into sexual exoticism. Molloy and Lawlor's take is quite unusual, being at once more mysterious and more chaste (though not at all prim).

For a start, submitting to what you may call a 'realist' urge, Molloy and Lawlor unreel their narrative with a freshly thought-out attitude towards film language and dialogue which presumes no more from the viewer than an ordinary 'real-life' witness. They clinically exclude the usual privileged information, establishing shots, backstory and visual or verbal cues and clues, and leaving a mysterious jigsaw for the viewer to assemble – much as Gerry, the film's quietly agonising protagonist, has to slowly put together and apprehend the precise nature of his long-unvisited dead brother's character, family and associates from the incomplete information available to him.

I labour this point, at the expense of narrative explication, because it is precisely this tentative quality of experience, and a filmmaking style that reflects it, that primarily interests the directors: how do we judge or fully grasp events, people or motives from the partial information provided in real life? The result is a film that is as much 'about' presumptions as it is about intuiting Gerry's emotions.

That emphasis also explains *Mister John*'s interesting attitude towards, among other things, sex, spirituality and humour. The scene where Gerry dives into the lake where his brother drowned – is he experiencing a melancholic rush of blood, or perhaps communing with the water ghosts of local lore? – is typically ambiguous. It walks a fine line – a confined path – between ordinary naturalism, keeping true to Gerry's merely confused point of view, and expressive symbolism, as if to say:

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Sean Ellis  
Mathilde Charpentier  
**Screenplay**  
Sean Ellis  
Frank E. Flowers  
Based on the Story  
by Sean Ellis  
**Cinematography**  
Sean Ellis

**Film Editor**  
Richard Metter  
**Production Design**  
Ian Traifalgar  
**Original Music**  
Robin Foster  
**Sound Design and  
Sound Editing**  
Sylvain Rety  
Sylvain Roux

**Costume Design**  
Lumen Medrano  
**@ Chocolate  
Frog Films**  
**Production  
Companies**  
Chocolate Frogs Films  
**Executive Producers**  
Sean Ellis

Celine Lopez  
Enrique Y. Gonzalez

#### Cast

**Jake Macapagal**  
Oscar Ramirez  
**John Arcilla**  
Douglas Ong  
**Althea Vega**

Mai Ramirez  
**Erin Panlilio**  
Angel Ramirez  
**Iasha Acelo**  
Baby Ramirez  
**Angelina Kanapi**  
Charlie  
**JM Rodriguez**  
Alfred Santos

**In Colour**  
[L78:1]  
Subtitled

**Distributor**  
Independent  
Distribution

The Philippines, present day. To escape the poverty of the northern Banaue district, rice farmer Oscar, his pregnant wife Mai and their two young daughters travel to Manila, the capital city. Oscar is soon ripped off by a conman, and the family wind up living in a slum. Oscar is offered steady, if dangerous, work as a security guard for an armoured truck company, and strikes up a friendship with senior officer Ong. Mai finds dancing work in a sleazy club. Explaining that the security company is likely to frown on Oscar's slum accommodation, Ong installs the family in the apartment he normally keeps for his mistress. Ong tells Oscar the following: that he has kept a lockbox full of money from a bank robbery during which his previous partner and one of the two robbers were killed;

the only way to access the money is to take the key imprint from the company HQ, then make a copy of the key; and that the only way to get into the company HQ is to attend a 'debriefing', a formal process that occurs after guards have been the victims of a robbery. Reluctantly, Oscar agrees to participate in a staged robbery. Before it can occur, Ong is murdered by the surviving criminal from the earlier bank robbery. Oscar finds the lockbox stowed in his new apartment. At HQ, following the 'debriefing', he is caught attempting to steal the key and shot dead by armed guards.

A coda reveals that Oscar managed to hide the key imprint inside a pendant and have it delivered to Mai with his possessions. Mai and the girls leave Manila with the money.



## The Mortal Instruments City of Bones

Director: Harald Zwart  
Certificate 12A 129m 49s

### Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

The first instalment of Cassandra Clare's young-adult fantasy-fiction series *The Mortal Instruments* reaches the big screen six years after publication. For a book beloved by millions of readers, that's quite a wait – the *Twilight* saga made the transition in half the time. But perhaps its long gestation and the delays to pre-production (co-financier Screen Gems temporarily stepped off the project last year) will work to its advantage, as the film releases to a measured hype rather than the disproportionate one that browbeat the makers of the Stephenie Meyer franchise and fanned the flames of anticlimax. For one thing, the atmosphere at the preview screening of *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* was all the more breathable for being filled with girlfriends six years older and more temperate.

Besides the shared market and serialisation, there isn't much of a likeness between this film and Meyer's vampire romance. *City of Bones* is its own being, set in a fantasy realm stewarded by another kind of heroic super-species: Shadowhunters. Part human, part angel, put on earth to destroy a demon subculture, they walk unseen among us. Raised as a human (or 'Mundane') by single mother Jocelyn, Brooklyn teen Clary Fray is oblivious to her Shadowhunter blood until she witnesses a slaying in a nightclub. The murderer – handsome Shadowhunter Jace – apprises Clary of her hidden abilities, and becomes her lodestar as she sets out on a path to self-discovery. On finding her mother vanished from their apartment, Clary is initiated into the 'Institute', a safe enclave for Shadowhunters. By learning the extent of her supernatural talents, she must revive the suppressed memory of her past to find the Mortal Cup – a consecrated relic of the Shadowhunter family – which is the key to her mother's disappearance.

Prologue-less, the film unapologetically pitches its audience into the middle of things – it's like getting into a car to have it start with a lurch before the passenger door has shut. Crude perhaps, but also refreshing. This headlong beginning, and a few narrative loose ends, seem excusable given a widespread approach to TV-watching that's peculiar to fantasy action-adventure – whereby it's OK by viewers to tune in to a mid-season episode of, say, *Buffy*, *Charmed* or *Xena: Warrior Princess* and find their bearings, work things out. On occasion, *City of Bones* requires this self-taught second sight – but otherwise moves at an exhilarating pace, with little pulses



City of angels: Lily Collins



My brother the devil: Aiden Gillen

anything more is unjustified; there will be no pseudo-transcendentalism here, thank you.

Likewise, straight after, Gerry is bitten by a venomous snake (and here composer Stephen McKeon is allowed a rare augmenting tympanic musical shock), resulting in a long-term hard-on, the humour of which the filmmakers forbid us to enjoy, no doubt because Gerry hardly finds it funny. At this point, it must be said, Molloy and Lawlor's discipline does not imply austerity. In their first work predominantly with professionals, the performances they extract from Aidan Gillen as Gerry and Zoe Tay as his brother's widow Kim are excellent, stripped

mainly, as they are, of the usual crutches of expositional and narrative-pushing dialogue, sound levels sometimes muted, as in life. Equally, cinematographer Ole Birkeland's often pellucid 35mm widescreen images of either green-fronded nature or neon cityscapes are fine, and often beautiful, while being nonetheless ever careful to avoid indulgence or inapposite expressionism.

Thus, a strange paradox: *Mister John* ends up as a fine film whose very integrity – its trueness to life – delimits the amounts of pleasure it offers. Only Molloy and Lawlor's next film will tell us if it constitutes an experiment they have enjoyed or a path they will journey on.

### Credits and Synopsis

#### Produced by

David Collins  
Fran Borgia  
Joe Lawlor

#### Written by

Christine Molloy  
Joe Lawlor

#### Director of

Photography

Ole Birkeland

#### Editors

Christine Molloy  
Joe Lawlor

#### Production Designer

#### Daniel Lim

#### Composer

Stephen McKeon

#### Sound Recordists

Singapore:

James Choong

London:

Clive Derbyshire

#### Costume Designer

Meredith Lee

©Samson Films,

Akanga Film Asia,

Asia, Desperate

Optimists, the British  
Film Institute

#### Production

#### Companies

BFI and Bord Scannán

na hÉireann/Irish

Film Board present

with the participation

of the Singapore

Film Commission

a Samson Films,

Akanga Film Asia,

Desperate Optimists

production

A film by Christine  
Molloy & Joe Lawlor

Produced with the

support of investment

incentives for the

Irish Film Industry

provided by the

Government of Ireland

Developed with the

assistance of Bord

Scannán na hÉireann/

the Irish Film Board

Made with the

support of the BFI's

Film Fund and the  
UK Film Council's

Development Fund

With the participation

of Bord Scannán na

hÉireann/the Irish

Film Board, Singapore

Film Commission

#### Cast

Aiden Gillen

Gerry Devine

Zoe Tay

Kim Devine  
Michael Thomas

Lester

Claire Keelan

Kathleen Devine

#### In Colour

[2.35:1]

#### Distributor

Curzon Film World

8,565 ft +0 frames

The present. A man, later identified as John Devine, floats in a lake on the outskirts of Singapore. Gerry Devine, the dead man's brother, having lost his luggage in transit, attends the mortuary and meets his brother's attractive widow Kim. Kim invites Gerry to stay at the family house, but Gerry shows a preference for staying at a hotel. Kim takes him to a hotel that she says is run by a friend. At the hotel – which, it transpires, caters for prostitutes and their clients, some of them from John's hostess bar – a restaurant worker explains to Gerry that the 'water ghost' has taken his brother, who must wait for a replacement before he can return. Gerry rejects a call from London from his wife Kathleen. A flashback reveals that Gerry and Kathleen are having marital difficulties following a possible infidelity on her part.

Gerry finally accepts Kim's offer to stay at her bungalow, where he meets his niece Isadora and is invited to make use of his dead brother's wardrobe. Visiting the site of his brother's death, Gerry is

bitten by a snake, causing him to suffer a 12-hour erection with which he has to contend while Kim introduces him to the hostesses and clients of the bar she must now run alone. One problem she outlines is Lester Hersch, a tattooed German ex-pat who owes her money. Gerry offers his help and visits Lester's house but only finds Lester's girlfriend Lak, who complains bitterly of Lester's promiscuity.

Gerry takes his first alcoholic drink at the bar and decides to make a session of it; his subsequent sleep is disturbed by flashbacks to arguments with his wife and a dream where he interviews his wife in a manner influenced by the hostess interview tapes that Kim has shown him. On a second visit to Lester's house, the two men fight, with Gerry coming off worse. Gerry revisits the lake and jumps in. Later that day, Gerry and Kim kiss but do not make love. Back in his own clothes at last, Gerry phones his daughter, promising her a gift. At his brother's funeral, Gerry paces the grounds alone, finally breaking down in tears.



of action in the treasure-hunt style.

The film is perfectly cast, with Lily Collins (as Clary) committing fully to the big-top drama of another dimension (by contrast with Kristen Stewart's approach to *Twilight's* Bella). Robert Sheehan gives a noteworthy performance as Clary's amorous best friend Simon, while the chemistry between crush-artists Clary and Jamie Campbell Bower's Jace has one twisting in one's seat with impatience for *The Kiss*.

The graphics are mostly impressive, if at times disappointingly familiar, and there's virtue in the way that director Harald Zwart gives precedence to his actors' interactions over the CGI aura. His fidelity to the novel's sense of fun sets the film apart and balances the requisite emotional intensity of the characters, while a reverence for the genre – there's a nod to *Close Encounters* – will win approval from sci-fi admirers. There are some laughable lines of dialogue (“When I said I’d never seen an angel...”): but that’s all part of the deal. **B**

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Produced by</b> Robert Kulzer Don Carmody	<b>Executive Producers</b> Bob Shaye Michael Lynne Martin Moszkowicz	<b>Meyers</b> Valentine Morgenstern
<b>Screenplay</b> Jessica Postigo Based on the novel by Cassandra Clare	<b>Cast</b> Lily Collins Clary Fray Jamie Campbell Bower Jace Wayland Robert Sheehan Simon Lewis Kevin Zegers Alec Lightwood Lena Headey Jocelyn Fray Kevin Durand Emil Pangborn Aidan Turner Luke Garroway Jemima West Isabelle Lightwood Godfrey Gao Magnus Bane CCH Pounder Madame Dorothea Jared Harris Hodge Starkweather Jonathan Rhys	<b>Dolby Digital/ SDDS/ Datasat In Colour [2.35:1]</b>
<b>Director of Photography</b> Geir Hartly Andreassen		<b>Distributor</b> El Films
<b>Editor</b> Jacqueline Carmody		<b>11,683 ft +8 frames</b>
<b>Production Designer</b> François Séguin		
<b>Music</b> Gabriel Yared		
<b>Costume Designer</b> Gersha Phillips		
<b>Production Companies</b> Constantin Film International GmbH and Unique Features (TMI) Inc. present a Constantin Film International GmbH/ Unique Features (TMI) Inc. production A Harald Zwart film		

Brooklyn, present day. Partying with friend Simon, teenager Clary Fray witnesses a murder at a nightclub. The perpetrator, Jace, explains that he is a Shadowhunter – as is Clary herself – born with the ability to kill demons. When Clary's mother Jocelyn vanishes, Jace takes Clary to the Shadowhunter Institute, where she learns that Jocelyn is being hunted for hiding the sacred Mortal Cup, to keep it safe from powers of corruption. Clary visits warlock Magnus Bane, who hitherto stifled her Shadowhunter instincts with a spell. After rescuing Simon from abduction by vampires, Clary and Jace kiss. Simon confesses his love for Clary. Clary discovers her ability to transform 3D objects into two-dimensional images. She finds the Cup in a tarot card of her mother's, but it is stolen by power-hungry Shadowhunter Valentine. He falsely claims to be father to both Clary and Jace; devastated, they believe him. He opens the Institute to demons but is stopped by Clary, Jace, Simon and fellow Shadowhunters Isabelle and Alec – and obliterated. Jocelyn is found alive. Jace persuades a reluctant Clary to reassemble with the Shadowhunters, despite what they've learned about each other.

## Percy Jackson Sea of Monsters

USA/Canada 2013

Director: Thor Freudenthal

Certificate PG 106m Os

### Reviewed by Patrick Fahy

It is three years since *Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief*, in which urban teenager Percy, Poseidon's son, first encountered Camp Half-Blood, a sort of summer camp with swords for the offspring of Olympians. Ostensibly, Percy's quest involved retrieving Zeus's stolen lightning, but his real task was clearly to take the baton from Harry Potter. Made by erstwhile Potter director Chris Columbus and producer Mark Radcliffe, *Lightning Thief* was similarly based on children's literature (five books by teacher Rick Riordan) about a lad with untapped powers joining a magical education system.

Though no masterpiece, *Lightning Thief* managed, clunkily, to mesh modern-day America with gods bickering on Mount Olympus, and established the conceit of our world's everyday appearances masking thrilling mythological realities (hence 'Percy' suggesting 'Perseus'). It displayed imagination (Medusa being a statue retailer, Steve Coogan's Hades residing beneath the Hollywood sign), and it borrowed merrily from *The Wizard of Oz*, with magic shoes, dope-filled flowers and a climactic encounter with a not-so-godlike figure.

*Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters* is a slick, good-hearted, determinedly cool sequel which spoils us with CGI but remains less engaging, inventive and Greek than its predecessor (the kitsch Olympus scenes are dropped entirely). It adds an agreeably grim backstory for Camp Half-Blood, but the screenplay occasionally appears to bend rules for plot convenience (“Cyclopes are fireproof!” Ah).

Director Thor Freudenthal (whose *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* confirmed his skill with young actors) draws a personable performance from Logan Lerman as Percy, and presents two arresting new peers: Tyson, Percy's sensitive half-brother,

who boasts cinema's most emotive cyclops eye yet, and competitive Clarisse, daughter of war god Ares. Meanwhile old sidekicks Grover (billed second but hardly in it) and Annabeth do little but pose for the posters.

Percy's quest, to find the Golden Fleece to restore the camp's broken defences, has a topical unsafe-homestead resonance, while another modern theme crops up in the notion that half-bloods, fruit of a mortal and an absentee god, all have parent issues. While Percy's adventures (as with Potter and Narnia) affirm the idea of the spiritual behind the mundane, *Sea of Monsters* takes pains to reassure God-fearing target audiences that its pagan polytheism is no anti-Christian harangue. Early on, oenophile teacher Dionysus, cursed with his wine turning into water as it's poured, declares enviously, “Christians have a guy who can do this trick in reverse. Now *that's* a god!”

There are intriguing political notes too. Whereas in *Lightning Thief* Grover says that there are more demigods around than you'd think, even at White House level (not – you know who?), three years on he laments that Washington's Capitol Building resembles Olympus, “right down to the dudes with power who only care about themselves”. Political ambiguity emerges after Percy uses an ironclad's firepower to effect an unlikely escape (echoing Pinocchio and the whale). “You gotta have faith, right?” he crows. “And a cannon,” Tyson adds, speaking so evenly that it's impossible to tell whether it's intended as anti-military irony or Second Amendment sincerity.

The film ends self-confidently, unearthing a new character clearly intended for big things later on. Yet if Percy is to square up to Harry Potter in popularity and longevity, he can't look to his laurels. There's still some magic missing. **B**

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Produced by</b> Karen Rosenfelt Michael Barnathan	<b>Visual Effects by</b> Rhythm & Hues Studios MPC Framestore Method Prana Animation Studios, Inc. The Embassy Scanline VFX <b>Stunt Co-ordinators</b> Scott Ateah Randy Hall Garvin Cross	territories except Brazil, Italy, Korea, Japan and Spain) ©TCF Hungary Film Rights Exploitation Limited Liability Company, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in Brazil, Italy, Korea, Japan and Spain)	Entertainment/1492 Pictures production With the participation of British Columbia Production Services Tax Credit <b>Executive Producers</b> Chris Columbus Mark Radcliffe Mark Morgan Guy Oseary Greg Mooradian	Annabeth Chase <b>Jake Abel</b> Luke <b>Douglas Smith</b> Tyson <b>Leven Rambin</b> Clarisse LaRue <b>Nathan Fillion</b> Hermes <b>Anthony</b> <b>Stewart Head</b> Chiron <b>Stanley Tucci</b> Dionysus, 'Mr D' <b>Mary Birdsong</b> <b>Yvette Nicole Brown</b> <b>Missi Pyle</b> the Gray Sisters	<b>Datasat In Colour [2.35:1]</b>
<b>Screenplay</b> Marc Guggenheim Based on the novel by Rick Riordan	<b>Director of Photography</b> Shelly Johnson				<b>Some screenings presented in 3D</b>
<b>Edited by</b> Mark Goldblatt	<b>Production Designer</b> Claude Paré				<b>Distributor</b> 20th Century Fox International (UK)
<b>Music</b> Andrew Lockington					<b>9,540 ft +0 frames</b>
<b>Sound Mixer</b> Michael McGee					
<b>Costume Designer</b> Monique Prudhomme					
	<b>©Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in all</b>	<b>Production Companies</b> Fox 2000 Pictures presents in association with TSG Entertainment a Sunswapt		<b>Cast</b> Logan Lerman Percy Jackson <b>Brandon T. Jackson</b> Grover <b>Alexandra Daddario</b>	<b>Dolby Digital/</b>

US, the present. Percy Jackson, son of Poseidon, lives at Camp Half-Blood with other demigods ('half-bloods'), including his newfound cyclops half-brother Tyson. Percy hears a prophecy about a saviour or destroyer of Olympus (possibly himself). A defence barrier protects the camp, radiating from a special tree rooted where half-blood Thalia died years ago while defending friends. Wayward half-blood Luke poisons Thalia's tree, weakening the barrier, and sends a mechanical bull rampaging through the camp.

The camp chooses conceited Clarisse to seek the Golden Fleece in the Sea of Monsters (or Bermuda Triangle), as its powers can heal the defences. Secretly,

Percy follows, along with Tyson and friends Annabeth and Grover, a satyr. Luke's men abduct Grover. Percy's gang ride on a hippocamp to Luke's yacht, where, captured, they learn that Luke seeks the Fleece to resurrect Kronos the Titan. Escaping the yacht, Percy and friends are swallowed by sea beast the Charybdis, in whose stomach they find Clarisse aboard an ironclad. They shoot their way out and reach Circeland, a ruined fairground island. Finding Grover, they steal the Fleece from the cyclops Polyphemus. Luke snatches the Fleece and resurrects Kronos, who eats him. Percy's gang destroy Kronos. The Fleece restores the tree and barrier. Thalia comes alive again. Percy suspects that the prophecy is about her.



# The Pervert's Guide to Ideology

United Kingdom/Ireland 2012

Director: Sophie Fiennes

Certificate 15 135m 50s

See Feature  
on page 32

## Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Slavoj Žižek's first collaboration with director Sophie Fiennes, 2006's *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, wowed critics with its cheeky distillation of psychoanalytic film theory, with the eccentric Slovenian philosopher inserting himself into classic clips and delivering rapid-fire expositions of, say, Hitchcock's *The Birds* as a drama about oedipal conflict. This follow-up replicates the numerous charms of that first film, as well as its multiple annoyances, but in many ways it's a bolder project and a riskier gamble. The tropes of Freudian analysis are familiar to most audiences partly because filmmakers themselves have referenced them so often in their work. Žižek's argument here about ideology is drawn from a Marxist tradition that has arguably never penetrated western popular culture in the same way. Audiences may or may not accept Žižek's political readings of the films that he chooses to discuss; but the films themselves sometimes resist the meanings he construes.

His starting-point is John Carpenter's *They Live* (1988), an easy warm-up exercise because it's an explicit essay in ideological critique which gives its hero a pair of magic glasses that enable him to see through the lies of consumer society. Ideology, Žižek explains, is not a filter that is imposed on 'real' reality, it is the very fabric of the only reality we can normally perceive. Like the magic glasses, film is a prosthetic aid which can sometimes allow us to glimpse the truth that we are not only trapped inside an illusion but are compelled to participate in and enjoy it. Swigging warm Coke in a desert, Žižek succinctly demonstrates that 'the real thing' which it is our duty to 'enjoy' falls far short of genuine pleasure and leaves us perpetually dissatisfied.

This leads to an interesting insight into screen violence and why it's so compelling: a film such as *Taxi Driver* (1976) erupts with the unexpressed revolutionary energy generated by the ideological entrapment of a human subject in the form of Travis Bickle. Many of the films Žižek focuses on tell macho stories of violent confrontation or resurgent male autonomy, from *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) to *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *The Searchers* (1956) to *The Dark Knight* (2008). But occasionally musicals and romances also feature, and these often prompt the most interesting (and disputable) analysis: *The Sound of Music* (1965) is co-opted hilariously into an argument about the ideology of religion and its hidden endorsement of sinful enjoyment, while *Titanic* (1997) is slickly reinterpreted as a narrative that insists on the impossibility of the lovers' inter-class relationship by smashing it to pieces with a great big iceberg, yet leaves the revolutionary impulse as a massive submerged wreck which haunts the film.

Sometimes Žižek – whose pieces to camera are delivered, apparently unscripted, from lovingly recreated sets of the films he's discussing – swerves too briskly from one point to another in his rush to encapsulate his big idea. He starts to make an interesting observation based on the fact that both *Full Metal Jacket* and *The Dark Knight* feature a character called Joker, but never really delivers it; he introduces the desert orgy from



Lacan of worms: Slavoj Žižek

*Zabriskie Point* (1970) without quite explaining why. Most frustrating is the way he cherry-picks a certain sequence from a classic film without taking the rest of it into account: his Lacanian reading of the ending of *Brief Encounter* (1945) as a demonstration of the absence of God raises a chuckle, but it does no justice to David Lean's

psychological masterpiece. Just as last year's *Room 237* demonstrated that *The Shining* (1980) can be interpreted in any number of ridiculous ways and still come out unscathed, Žižek's criticism can be fun without necessarily being convincing. In fact, Žižek implicitly acknowledges this, pointing out that Beethoven's Ninth has successfully resisted successive reinterpretations which have claimed it as a fascist or democratic political anthem.

He's on safer ground with films that come pre-loaded with an overt political agenda, and the sections on Nazi and Soviet propaganda contain real gems of insight. But there's always a disquieting suspicion with Žižek that he's somehow having us on with his crazy mannerisms and his mad-professor accent. It's what makes him a controversial star in the academic firmament and perhaps lies at the bottom of his recent highly public spat with Noam Chomsky, who has accused him of peddling empty theories with no hard facts to back them up. Žižek might almost have made this film in anticipation of Chomsky's attack: its overarching thesis is that these theories are not arcane abstractions at all, but are written into the very culture that surrounds and defines us.

The slipperiness of his rhetoric and the dazzle of its sudden reversals and pop-up paradoxes are best encountered, perhaps, as filmic artefacts themselves. The act of appropriation implied by the way Žižek inserts himself into the frame of each clip amounts to a confession of trickery. Early on in the film, Žižek talks us through the layers of a Kinder egg in order to explain consumer desire – the disappointing plastic treasure at the centre being merely the excuse that justifies the transient enjoyment of the chocolate. Like the hidden toy, Žižek's promise to show us the truth about ideology can't really be delivered. But like the chocolate, the film's real offer is all in the idea of cracking something open to reveal a secret – our reward is an easy-to-swallow mixture of great films and the illusion of mastery over them. **S**

## Credits and Synopsis

### Producers

James Wilson  
Martin Rosenbaum  
Katie Holly  
Sophie Fiennes

### Director of Photography

Remko Schnorr

### Film Editor

Ethel Shepherd  
Lucy van Lonkhuyzen

### Production Designer

Steve Fanagan

### Costume Designer

Debbie Millington

©British Film  
Institute/Channel

Four Television/Bord  
Scannán na hÉireann/  
The Irish Film Board

### Production Companies

British Film Institute  
and Film4 present  
in association  
with Rooks Nest  
Entertainment and  
with the participation  
of Bord Scannán  
na hÉireann/The  
Irish Film Board  
AP Guide production  
in association with  
Blinder Films  
A film by Sophie  
Fiennes  
Developed with the  
assistance of the

UK Film Council  
Produced with the  
support of investment  
incentives for the Irish  
film industry provided  
by the Government  
of Ireland  
A P Guide/Blinder  
Films production  
for BFI and Film4  
With the participation  
of Bord Scannán  
na hÉireann/The  
Irish Film Board  
In association  
with Rooks Nest  
Entertainment  
Made with the  
support of the British  
Film Institute's  
Film Fund

### Executive Producers

Katherine Butler  
Tabitha Jackson  
Shani Hinton  
Michael Sackler  
Julia Godzinskaya  
**Film Extracts**  
*They Live* (1988)  
*The Sound of Music* (1965)  
*Tokyo Orinpikku/Tokyo Olympiad* (1964)  
*A Clockwork Orange* (1971)  
*West Side Story* (1961)  
*Taxi Driver* (1976)  
*The Searchers* (1956)  
*Jaws* (1975)  
*Triumph des*

*Willens/Triumph of the Will* (1935)  
*Der ewige Jude/The Eternal Jew* (1940)  
*Cabaret* (1972)  
*I Am Legend* (2007)  
*Titanic* (1997)  
*Padeniyé Berlina/The Fall of Berlin* (1949)  
*Full Metal Jacket* (1987)  
*MASH* (1969)  
*If....* (1968)  
*The Dark Knight* (2008)  
*Lásky jedné plavovlásky/A Blonde in Love* (1965)  
*Hori, má panenka/Hori, my girl* (1967)

*Brief Encounter* (1945)  
*Brazil* (1985)  
*The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)  
*Seconds* (1966)  
*Zabriskie Point* (1970)

**Dolby Digital  
In Colour and  
Black and White**

**Distributor**  
Picturehouse  
Entertainment

**12,225 ft +0 frames**

A documentary in which Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek uses excerpts from classic and obscure films to explain how ideology operates on the human subject. He demonstrates how the fantasies and desires expressed through cinema both act out our relationship to the rules and repressions that control us and give an outlet to the violent rage caused by our dissatisfaction with this unfree existence. By watching films carefully and thinking critically about the stories they tell, he suggests,

we can remind ourselves that ideology depends on the perpetuation of lies, and that breaking through this false structure depends on a violent revolution within the self. The desolate conclusion that such a critical viewer must reach – that there is no 'big Other', no God and no outside power to which we can refer – turns out to be our saving grace because our unfulfilled desire for meaning is the source of the revolutionary energy we need to challenge the status quo.

# R.I.P.D.

USA/Japan 2013  
Director: Robert Schwentke  
Certificate 12A 96m 51s

## Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Extensive reports of set and post-production troubles preceded *The Lone Ranger* and *World War Z* into theatres, but *R.I.P.D.* is a quieter train wreck: \$130 million was spent somewhere but you can't see it on screen, with special effects — normally a key draw of this kind of big summer spectacle — weak across the board. There's a would-be showstopping moment when, at the moment of his death, dirty cop Nick Walker (Ryan Reynolds) wanders through a world that's frozen around him. The swooping camera only draws attention to CGI flames and other poorly rendered chaos, unsatisfactory from every angle.

The simple plot has been repeatedly and correctly compared to *Men in Black* (1997), another big-budget movie adapted from a cult graphic novel cleaned up for PG-13 consumption. Again a young rookie (just died, recruited to the afterlife's Rest In Peace Department) is paired with a crusty older mentor: Roy Pulsifer (Jeff Bridges), a Doc Holliday-esque sheriff killed in a shootout. Bridges is in burlesque self-parody mode, offering up a cruder, buffoonish gloss on his *True Grit* character Rooster Cogburn, another gruff backwoodsman with a flair for outsized violence masking a protective streak. As with his meditation interlude in *Trom: Legacy* (2010), Bridges also brings in his well-known affinity for Zen Buddhism: "It took me a long time to get this calm," he tells the impatient Nick. Once-versatile actors can obtain productive results by strip-mining a narrow range (as in Robert Downey Jr's late career resurrection); but shoving a little zoned-out Lebowsky into every character is a bad, self-congratulatory look on Bridges.

Such rote eccentricities are in keeping with *R.I.P.D.*'s programmatic blandness. Dead souls who stubbornly remain on earth are called 'deados', a panache-less detail that's about the total extent of the world-building. *R.I.P.D.* rigorously conforms to the buddy comedy's beats, down to individual lines whose inclusion is practically mandatory (Roy on being assigned a partner: "We've been over this before. I'm a one-man operation"). Much of the time-killing narrative has Reynolds and Bridges bickering



Dead beat: Jeff Bridges, Ryan Reynolds

in their car while driving past nondescript locations. (Shot and set in Boston, it's a perversely anonymous-looking film.) There are bizarre bits of visual filler, akin to the running-time padding in 70s grindhouse cheapies: long-shots of people standing still while moving up and down on escalators, 15 seconds of elaborate CGI to depict a vault's operations (a detail with no further bearing on the plot). One gag so satisfying it's repeated regularly is that Reynolds and Bridges appear as other people to humans: Reynolds as an elderly Chinese man, Bridges as the gorgeous blonde woman with him (Marisa Miller, a model making her virutally wordless film debut).

There is, eventually, some semblance of urgency via an anonymous world-threatening macguffin (the Staff of Jericho, not that it matters), which if deployed could open the portals of the living and the dead worlds, thereby endangering all mankind and so on. "Once you spend more than \$100 million on a movie, you have to save the world," screenwriter Damon Lindelof recently said when explaining why threatening all of existence has become the rule rather than the exception in big-budget mayhem. "I have to construct a macguffin based on if they shut off this, or they close this portal... it will save the world. You are very limited in terms of how you execute that." That structural slackness pervades *R.I.P.D.*, extending to the sub-TV establishing shots and talking heads that constitute director Robert Schwentke's visual strategy. ☹

## Credits and Synopsis

### Produced by

Neal H. Moritz  
Mike Richardson  
Michael Fottrell

### Screenplay

Phil Hay  
Matt Manfredi

### Story

David Dobkin, Phil Hay  
and Matt Manfredi  
Based on the Dark  
Horse comic created  
by Peter M. Lenkov

### Director of

Photography  
Alwin Küchler

### Edited by

Mark Helfrich

### Production Designer

Alec Hammond

### Music

Christophe Beck

### Production

Sound Mixer

Tom Williams

### Costume Designer

Susan Lyall

### Visual Effects

Supervisor

Michael J. Wassel

### Supervising Stunt

Co-ordinator

David Ellis

©Universal Studios

### Production

Companies

Universal Pictures

presents an Original

Film/Dark Horse

Entertainment

production

A Robert

Schwentke film

Presented in

association with

Dentsu Inc./

Fuji Television

Network, Inc.

### Executive Producers

Ori Marmur  
Ryan Reynolds  
Jonathon Komack  
Martin  
David Dobkin  
Keith Goldberg  
Peter M. Lenkov

### Cast

Jeff Bridges  
Roy Pulsifer  
Ryan Reynolds  
Nick Walker  
Nick Bacon  
Bobby Hayes

### Mary-Louise Parker

Proctor  
Stephanie Szostak  
Julia Walker  
Mike O'Malley  
Elliot  
Marisa Miller  
Roy's avatar  
James Hong  
Nick's avatar  
Robert Knepper  
Stanley Nawicki  
Devin Ratray  
Pulaski  
Larry Joe Campbell  
Officer Murphy

### Dolby Digital/

Datasat/SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

### Some screenings

presented in 3D

### Distributor

Universal Pictures  
International  
UK & Eire

8,626 ft +8 frames

Boston, the present. Crooked cop Nick Walker tells partner Bobby Hayes that he's going to turn in the gold they illegally confiscated from a drug bust. During a raid, Bobby shoots Nick dead. Awakening in purgatory, Nick is given the choice of joining the Rest In Peace Department (which patrols the living world for dead souls who refuse to leave) or facing judgement. After

joining the R.I.P.D. and being partnered with Roy Pulsifer, Nick discovers that the gold is part of the Staff of Jericho, which if assembled could catastrophically open the portal between the dead and living worlds. Despite being suspended from service, Nick and Roy learn that Bobby is the ringleader of the dead souls. They destroy the Staff of Jericho, saving the world.

# Rush

United Kingdom/Germany/USA 2013  
Director: Ron Howard  
Certificate 15 122m 15s

## Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

Some very heavy artillery has been brought to bear on *Rush*, a dramatised account of the intense rivalry between Formula 1 drivers James Hunt and Niki Lauda. The film is directed by Ron Howard on a rare break from Hollywood assignments, boasts a screenplay by Peter Morgan, and stars Chris Hemsworth, best known as the mighty Thor. Shot by Anthony Dod Mantle, it also has some spectacular motor-racing sequences. For all the noise and fury, though, this remains a strangely superficial account of the extraordinary events of the 1976 Formula 1 season, a story told with more nuance and depth in Matthew Whiteman's recent TV documentary *Hunt vs Lauda: F1's Greatest Racing Rivals*.

There is no faulting the central performances. Australian actor Hemsworth certainly captures Hunt's swagger and impulsiveness — with his long hair and grinning delivery, he looks and sounds uncannily like the man himself — and German actor Daniel Brühl is exceptional as the ultra-analytical Lauda.

As in so many Peter Morgan screenplays, there are lines of dialogue and incidents that he's taken straight from 'real life' and some that he's made up — and we never know which is which. It's easy to understand what attracted him to the material: like broadcaster David Frost and disgraced US president Richard Nixon in *Frost/Nixon* (2008), Hunt and Lauda are polar opposites who turn out to have an unlikely rapport, fascinated by each other precisely because they're so different. 'Hunt the Shunt' (as Hunt was nicknamed because of his propensity to crash into opponents) has a highly romantic approach to motor racing. He sees it as a 'noble' calling and is quite ready to risk death in pursuit of victory. He's also a relentless womaniser and hedonist. However, the filmmakers are keen to emphasise that he doesn't take racing lightly: when he's wired before a race, he throws up; when things go against him, he sulks like a child. Lauda is altogether more calculating. For him, racing is a matter of risk assessment and mechanical engineering. The 1970s was a notoriously lethal decade in Formula 1, when cars were — as they are described here — "bombs on wheels". The irony is that Lauda was the one who crashed. On 1 August 1976, in the German Grand Prix at the notoriously dangerous Nüburgring, he swerved off the track and was nearly killed. In spite of his burns and severe injuries, he made a heroic comeback less than two months later.

Some of the parallels the film draws between Lauda and Hunt seem glib: the latter was a



Shunt man: Chris Hemsworth



heavy smoker who died in his mid-40s; the former had to overcome the effects of smoke on his lungs after his crash. There's a corniness to the storytelling that causes the film finally to skid into buddy-movie territory – at a crucial race in Japan, for example, we see Lauda and Hunt wave at one another at the start line to the accompaniment of Hans Zimmer's music.

As a movie about cars, speed and ambition, *Rush* is often exhilarating. Dod Mantle's cinematography has the same fluidity and improvisatory quality that make his Dogme films so distinctive. But as a piece of storytelling, it's one-dimensional boy's-own fare. What matters most to the filmmakers are the events on the track. In their own way, they are every bit as blinkered as the drivers whose stories they are telling. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Produced by</b> Andrew Eaton Eric Fellner Brian Oliver Peter Morgan Brian Grazer Ron Howard <b>Written by</b> Peter Morgan <b>Director of Photography</b> Anthony Dod Mantle <b>Edited by</b> Dan Hanley Mike Hill <b>Production Designer</b> Mark Digby <b>Music</b> Hans Zimmer <b>Production Sound Mixer</b> Danny Hambrook <b>Costume Designer</b> Julian Day <b>Stunt Co-ordinator</b> Franklin Henson  ©Rush Films Limited/Egoli Tossell Film and Action Image <b>Production Companies</b>	<b>Exclusive Media</b> presents with Cross Creek Pictures in association with Imagine Entertainment a Revolution Films/Working Title Films/Imagine Entertainment production <b>A Brian Grazer production</b> A Ron Howard film With the participation of Double Negative <b>Executive Producers</b> Guy East Nigel Sinclair Tobin Armbrust Tim Bevan Michael Winterbottom Tyler Thompson Todd Hallowell  <b>Cast</b> <b>Chris Hemsworth</b> <b>James Hunt</b> <b>Daniel Brühl</b> Niki Lauda	<b>Olivia Wilde</b> Suzy Miller <b>Alexandra Maria Lara</b> Marlene Lauder <b>David Calder</b> Louis Stanley <b>Natalie Dormer</b> Gemma, nurse <b>Pierfrancesco Favino</b> Clay Regazzoni <b>Stephen Mangan</b> Alastair Caldwell <b>Christian McKay</b> Lord Hesketh <b>Alistair Petrie</b> Stirling Moss <b>Colin Stinton</b> Teddy Mayer <b>Julian Rhind-Tutt</b> Anthony 'Bubbles' Horsley  <b>Dolby Digital/ DataSat/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles</b>  <b>Distributor</b> StudioCanal Limited  <b>11,002 ft +8 frames</b>
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**The 1970s.** English racing driver James Hunt competes against the Austrian Niki Lauda for the first time in a Formula 3 race. Hunt, a reckless playboy driving for a team owned by eccentric aristocrat Lord Hesketh, wins.

Lauda breaks with his wealthy family, who want him to follow a more respectable profession, and buys his way on to a team. Later he moves with friend and fellow driver Clay Regazzoni to Formula 1 team Ferrari. Hunt's career stutters as Hesketh runs out of money, and his marriage to model Suzy Miller breaks down. Needing a driver at short notice, the McLaren F1 team hires Hunt for the 1976 season.

Lauda, already the 1975 champion, makes a strong start to the season but has a horrific crash at the German Grand Prix. As Lauda recovers, Hunt eats into his lead. In spite of his injuries, Lauda makes a comeback less than two months later at the Italian Grand Prix. The season boils down to the final race in Japan. Lauda retires because of rain; Hunt finishes third to win the Championship.

This is the peak of Hunt's career. Sometime later, Hunt and Lauda meet by chance at an Italian airport. Their mutual respect is evident, but so too is the fact that Hunt will never challenge Lauda in the same way again.

## The Smurfs 2

USA 2013  
 Director: Raja Gosnell  
 Certificate U 104m 45s

### Reviewed by Kate Stables

Raja Gosnell is a specialist in the 'hybrid' family film, mixing live-action and CGI characters: the amiably goofy *Scooby-Doo* series, the forgettable *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* and the asinine but astonishingly profitable *The Smurfs*. This hopped-up, predictable and perkily homiletic sequel suggests that creatively, he's not on an upward curve.

The repetitive villain-vs-CGI-creature confrontations and pratfalls shift to Paris – evil magician Gargamel's HQ is under the Opera, Phantom-style. All that's novel is a sermonising strand about 'blended families', hammered home with a lack of subtlety matched only by the hefty amounts of product placement.

Neil Patrick Harris and Brendan Gleeson pitching in some quiet comedy as the Smurfs' human helpers; but Hank Azaria's Gargamel, armed with his dragon wand ("Say hello to my enormous friend"), spins and spits like a panto villain. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

<b>Produced by</b> Jordan Kerner <b>Screenplay</b> J. David Stem David N. Weiss Jay Scherick David Ronn Karey Kirkpatrick <b>Story</b> J. David Stem David N. Weiss Jay Scherick David Ronn Based on the characters and works of Peyo <b>Director of Photography</b> Phil Méheux <b>Editor</b> Sabrina Plisco <b>Production Designer</b> Bill Boes <b>Music</b> Heitor Pereira <b>Sound Mixer</b> Patrick Rousseau <b>Costume Designer</b> Rita Ryack Véronique Marchessault <b>Special Visual Effects and Animation</b> Sony Pictures Imageworks Inc. Culver City, California Sony Pictures	Imageworks Canada Inc.  ©Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. and Hemisphere - Culver II, LLC <b>Production Companies</b> Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Animation present in association with Hemisphere Media Capital A Kerner Entertainment Company Production A film by Raja Gosnell This film has benefitted from the tax credit for foreign film production in France. With the participation of the Canadian Film or Video Production Services Tax Credit <b>Executive Producers</b> Ezra Swerdlow Ben Haber Paul Neenan  <b>Cast</b> <b>Neil Patrick Harris</b> Patrick Winslow <b>Brendan Gleeson</b> Victor Doyle	<b>Jayma Mays</b> Grace Winslow <b>Hank Azaria</b> Gargamel  <b>Voice Cast</b> <b>Katy Perry</b> Smurfette <b>Hank Azaria</b> Gargamel <b>Jonathan Winters</b> Papa <b>Christina Ricci</b> Vexy <b>JB Smoove</b> Hackus <b>George Lopez</b> Grouchy <b>Anton Yelchin</b> Clumsy <b>John Oliver</b> Vanity  <b>Dolby Digital SDS</b> <b>DataSat In Colour [1.85:1]</b>  <b>Some screenings presented in 3D</b>  <b>Distributor</b> Sony Pictures Releasing  <b>9,427 ft +8 frames</b>
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Paris, present day. Evil magician Gargamel kidnaps his bad-turned-good 'child' Smurfette from Smurfland, planning world domination when she confesses the Smurf energy formula. Papa Smurf, a Smurf posse and the human Winslow family chase Gargamel around Paris to regain her. Both Patrick Winslow and Smurfette find it difficult to accept their respective stepfathers as their true parents. To save Gargamel's other 'evil' Smurf children, Vexy and Hackus, who are fading for lack of Smurf energy, Smurfette gives Gargamel the formula. Patrick and his stepfather Victor team up to break the energy-extracting Smurfinator and save the Smurfs. The resulting bolt of blue energy banishes Gargamel. Smurfette and Patrick finally appreciate their bond with their stepfathers. Hackus and Vexy are welcomed into Smurfland as true Smurfs.

## Thanks for Sharing

Director: Stuart Blumberg  
 Certificate 15 112m 21s

### Reviewed by Anna Smith

Life for a sex addict is hard, if this support-group comedy-drama is anything to go by. You can't take public transport – way too many bodies to rub up against; casual sex is off limits, as is the internet. Adam (Mark Ruffalo) even has the TV removed when he stays in hotels, for fear that he might see tempting images and pick up the phone for a prostitute.

It's a scenario that's ripe for humour, and chubby doctor Neil (Josh Gad) provides much of this. A tragicomic figure, he's a sex offender who's been ordered to attend the 12-Step Programme – and yet still can't resist secretly filming up his boss's skirt. While this is initially played for laughs, the cost to Neil is clear: he must clean up his act, or his career and even his life could be on the line. Neil's addiction is making him depressed and chum Dede (Pink) even claims to have been suicidal as a result of her addiction. While this film acknowledges and exploits the fact that sex addiction is inherently funny to the outsider, the message is clear: it's no joke when you're a sufferer.

This point is hammered home hard in an earnest script with an autobiographical feel. There's something slightly pleading about the stream of examples of admirable restraint, not to mention the pity when our heroes are misunderstood. "Isn't that something that guys just say when they get caught cheating?" asks Gwyneth Paltrow's Phoebe when told that Adam is a sex addict.

Entertaining though it is, the whole film plays as a defensive response to her question. Parallels are made with other addictions, such as the alcoholism of support-group leader Mike (Tim Robbins), the drug problems of his son, and even the food phobias of health-freak Phoebe. You can be addicted to anything, posits *Thanks for Sharing*, but the most devastating consequences are touched on rather than explored. **S**



Stiff resolve: Mark Ruffalo

co-writer Stuart Blumberg's directorial debut was torn between examining the dark side and delivering a chirpy romantic comedy, it ultimately falls firmly on the side of the latter, delivering an amiable ensemble affair. Only a handful of scenes recall the sharp character humour of *The Kids Are All Right* (2010), also written by Blumberg. One moment in particular feels like a glimpse of the bleaker film that never was: at Adam's flat, his young conquest Becky suddenly begs him to punish her, and calls him "Daddy" before becoming aroused and then breaking into hysterics. It's a shocking scene that signals both Becky's abusive past and the lengths the otherwise kindly Adam will go to when craving a fix. As Adam picks up his life and moves on, we're left wondering what happened to Becky – and how, like a recovering addict, *Thanks for Sharing* is keen to leave its dark side behind. **S**

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced By**  
William Migliore  
David Koplan  
Leslie Urdang  
Dean Vanech  
Miranda de Pencier

**Written by**

Stuart Blumberg  
Matt Winston

**Director of**

**Photography**

Yaron Orbach

**Editor**

Anne McCabe

**Production**

**Designer**

Beth Mickle

**Original Music**

Christopher

Lennertz

**Costume Designer**

Peggy Schnitzer

**Production**

**Companies**

Lionsgate Presents  
an Olympus Pictures

**Production**

A Class 5 Films

**Production**

**Executive Producer**

Edward Norton

**Distributor**

Koch Media

Entertainment

**10,111 ft +8 frames**

### Cast

**Mark Ruffalo**

Adam

**Tim Robbins**

Mike

**Gwyneth Paltrow**

Phoebe

**Josh Gad**

Neil

**Joely Richardson**

Mike's wife

**Patrick Fugit**

Danny

**Alecia Moore**

[i.e. 'Pink']

Dede

**Dolby Digital**

**In Colour**

New York, the present. At a support-group meeting, sex addict Adam celebrates five years of abstinence. The group's rules state that sex and masturbation are not permitted outside a committed relationship. Sponsor Mike, a former alcoholic who is happily married, congratulates Adam, while sponsee Neil struggles with his compulsion to masturbate and rub up against women on the subway. Mike's son Danny, a former drug addict, returns home. Adam meets Phoebe at a dinner party and they start dating. Phoebe reveals that her ex was an addict and that she has vowed never to date an addict again; Adam decides to keep his addiction a secret from her. Neil befriends new support-group member Dede, who encourages him to abstain and to stand up to his domineering mother. Neil loses his job as a doctor after filming up his boss's skirt. Phoebe finds Adam's sobriety medal and he tells her the truth. Phoebe attends a dinner at Mike's, after which Mike's wife can't find her pain medication. Mike blames Danny and the pair fight. Mike's wife is injured trying to break up the scuffle; Danny flees. Phoebe worries that Adam will relapse and have an affair; the pair row and break up. In hospital after a drink-driving incident, Danny makes up with his parents. Adam relapses and uses a prostitute, later calling an old fling, Becky, who becomes suicidal after a role play in which she calls him "Daddy". Adam calls Neil, who breaks down the bathroom door and advises the ambulance of Becky's non-fatal overdose. Neil celebrates 30 days of abstinence. Adam and Phoebe reunite.

## The To Do List

USA 2013

Director: Maggie Carey

Certificate 15 104m



Tongue-tied: Aubrey Plaza

### Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Like fantasies of a distant land that one has never seen but only heard described, sex in the virgin imagination is only a remotely recognisable version of itself, and in the hysteria and delusion occasioned by the bugbear of 'losing it' lie the makings of the great American teen-sex comedy.

While the mention of the genre should summon images of the *Porky's* shower peephole, *The To Do List* has a female gaze. The film's protagonist, Brandi (Aubrey Plaza), is a straight-A student and habitual over-achiever who draws inspiration from the feminist role models realistically available to a girl in suburban Boise in 1993 – more than once a framed photograph of Hillary Clinton is viewed in her room. Hillary, however, isn't a particularly helpful

guide when it comes to negotiating the thickets of sex, which Brandi is determined to do.

Pointedly and somewhat poignantly, *The To Do List* is set just at the cusp of the internet era, so when confronted with questions the dictionary doesn't answer, Brandi actually has to talk to her friends Wendy and Fiona (Sarah Steele and *Arrested Development's* great, zaftig Alia Shawkat) or her more experienced older sister Amber (Rachel Bilson, channelling Tiffani-Amber Thiessen of contemporary after-school sitcom *Saved by the Bell*). Pop references from the 1990s litter the opening credits, the wardrobe selections, the soundtrack choices and even the species of guys that Brandi hooks up with – in one memorable moment, Andy Samberg turns up as frontman for a touring

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**

Jennifer Todd

Brian Robbins

Sharla Sumpter

Bridgett

**Written by**

Maggie Carey

**Director of**

**Photography**

Doug Emmett

**Edited by**

Paul Frank

**Production Designer**

Ryan Berg

**Music**

Raney Shockne

**Sound Mixer**

Dennis Grzesik

**Costume Designer**

Tracye Gigi Field

©Granville

Pictures Inc.

**Production**

**Companies**

CBS Films presents

a Varsity Pictures/

Mark Gordon

**Company production**

**Executive Producers**

Mark Gordon

Maggie Carey

Bill Hader

Tracy McGrath

Greg Walter

Tom Lassally

**Film Extracts**

*Beaches* (1988)

**Cast**

**Aubrey Plaza**

Brandi Klark

**Johnny Simmons**

Cameron

**Bill Hader**

Willy

**Alia Shawkat**

Fiona

**Sarah Steele**

Wendy

**Scott Porter**

Rusty Waters

**Rachel Bilson**

Amber Klark

**Christopher**

Mintz-Plasse

Duffy

**Andy Samberg**

Van

**Donald Glover**

Derrick

**Connie Britton**

Mrs Klark

**Clark Gregg**

Judge Klark

**Adam Pally**

Chip

**Dolby Digital/**

**Datasat**

**In Colour**

**Distributor**

Sony Pictures

Releasing

Boise, Idaho, 1993. Brandi Klark graduates at the top of her class, but her academic success has come at the expense of her social life. When Brandi's sexually experienced friends Fiona and Wendy trick her into attending a party, Brandi becomes infatuated with college hunk Rusty. Discovering that Rusty is her co-worker at her summer job at the municipal pool, the virginal Brandi determines to accrue enough sexual experience to win him over. Brandi approaches the problem like an assignment, putting together a list of sex acts to perform. Her science-lab partner Cameron is used for convenient sexual experimentation, but soon Brandi has branched out to touring band members, other co-workers and even Wendy's ex – which opens

a rift between the friends. Meanwhile Cameron learns the clinical nature of Brandi's undertaking and refuses to speak to her. During a revenge raid on a rival country club, Rusty comes on to Brandi and they arrange a date. She loses her virginity in his van at a local make-out spot. When Rusty drops her at home after an anticlimactic performance, Cameron attacks him. As the boys fight, Brandi turns her back on both of them, deciding that winning back Fiona and Wendy is more important to her. She manages this by serenading the pair with 'The Wind Beneath My Wings'.

At college, Brandi runs into Cameron.

They retreat into her dorm and finally consummate their relationship.



## 2 Guns

USA/United Arab Emirates 2013  
Director: Baltasar Kormákur  
Certificate 15 108m 42s

### Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

At the centre of *2 Guns*, a film whose action criss-crosses the Texas-Mexico border along with illegal immigrants and the contraband of the drug cartels, is the idea that the various US law-enforcement agencies are no more than warring rival clans, government-backed crime families. Not only do they wholly fail to share information vital to national security, but also engage in open squabbles as rogue elements within different agencies flagrantly rip one another off.

It's a not-unpromising concept, though it loses its immediacy when scriptwriter Blake Masters calls on his characters to punch home statements about 'Amerikkka' to make sure the point won't evade the least attentive audience members – the worst offender being Bill Paxton's CIA black-ops strongman, prone to musing that "it's a free market... not a free world" between torture sessions.

Bobby 'Beans' Trench (Denzel Washington) and Marcus 'Stig' Stigman (Mark Wahlberg) are the two relatively honest men caught in the middle of internecine warfare in a corrupt borderland. Partners-in-crime turned enemies turned partners again, Bobby and Stig communicate in a language of catchphrases, with occasional digressions to talk about masculine codes. This is to be expected, for the first 20 minutes of *2 Guns* packs in references to *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia* and *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, while the solution that Stig ultimately proposes to deal with the various parties vying for \$43 million from an illegal CIA slush fund is downright Peckinpahian: "Take every one of them out. Kill 'em all."

The comparisons end there, though Icelandic director Baltasar Kormákur, who handled last year's competent Wahlberg vehicle *Contraband*, does know how to land his punches in a set piece. The high point is Stig's blindsiding ambush of cartel boss Papi Greco (Edward James Olmos), which begins with a Ford Bronco being used as a missile, continues with Bobby and Stig carving up the desert and



Lawmen: Denzel Washington, Mark Wahlberg

beating the hell out of one another's vehicles, and ends with the leads rolling around in the dust, trying to make one another cry 'Uncle'.

The film sets the scene for its opening heist with an offhand clarity – "You ever heard the saying, 'Never rob the bank across from the diner that has the best doughnuts in three counties'?" asks Bobby – and throughout Kormákur keeps lines of action clear, if not fussily ruler-drawn. The network of loyalties is rather messy, though, and the time it takes to tick off all the various betrayals doesn't leave much to survey their fallout. A bit involving Bobby's DEA cohort and casual gal pal Deb (Paula Patton) shacking up with Stig's superior, Quince (James Marsden), is particularly fudged.

While knotted up with plotting, *2 Guns* finds some breathing room in the badinage between its leads, who sell everything even when they're working with dead-on-the-page dialogue. Shooting New Orleans and New Mexico for Old Mexico and South Texas, Kormákur, who must've spent a good chunk of the budget on DVDs of 70s American actioners for the crew, has captured a vintage backwater south-west, and rounded up innumerable specimens of weaselly, pocked and rutted outlaw physiognomies to populate his movie. You ever heard the saying "Any movie that has Fred Ward in it can't be all bad"? ☺

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Marc Platt  
Randall Emmett  
Norton Herrick  
Adam Siegel  
George Furla  
Ross Richie  
Andrew Cosby  
**Screenplay**  
Blake Masters  
Based on the  
BOOM! Studios  
graphic novels by  
Steven Grant  
**Director of**  
**Photography**  
Oliver Wood  
**Edited by**  
Michael Tronick  
**Production Designer**  
Beth Mickle  
**Music**  
Clinton Shorter  
**Sound Mixer**  
Willie Burton  
**Costume Designer**  
Laura Jean Shannon  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Darrin Prescott

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Fifteen, LLC and  
Universal Studios  
**Production**  
**Companies**  
Universal Pictures  
and Emmett/Furla  
Films present a Marc  
Platt production  
in association with  
Oasis Ventures  
Entertainment  
Ltd./Envision  
Entertainment/  
Herrick  
Entertainment/  
BOOM! Studios  
A Baltasar  
Kormákur film  
**Executive Producers**  
Brandt Andersen  
Motaz M. Nabulsi  
Joshua Skurla  
Mark Damon

**Cast**  
Denzel Washington  
Robert 'Bobby' Trench  
Mark Wahlberg

Marcus 'Stig' Stigman  
Paula Patton  
Deb Rees  
Bill Paxton  
Earl  
Fred J. Ward  
Admiral Tuwey  
James Marsden  
Quince  
Edward James  
Olmos  
Papi Greco  
Robert John Burke  
Jessup  
Greg Sproles  
Chief Lucas  
Patrick Fischler  
Dr Ken

Dolby Digital/  
Datasat/SDDS  
In Colour  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
E1 Films

9,783 ft +0 frames

**Texas and Mexico, present day. Criminals Bobby 'Beans' Trench and Marcus 'Stig' Stigman are preparing to rob the Tres Cruces bank. Flashbacks reveal their alleged motivation – avenging themselves on Mexican cartel boss Papi Greco – as well as their real motivation. Unbeknown to one another, both men are working undercover to bust Papi Greco – Bobby for the DEA, Stig as a naval intelligence officer. After they take \$43 million from Tres Cruces, Stig double-crosses Bobby, whose true identity is revealed after Stig shoots him. Stig leaves Bobby for dead in the desert. After he delivers the money to his superior officer Quince, Stig is in turn double-crossed and narrowly escapes Quince's execution attempt. The wounded Bobby reappears, only to be implicated in the murder of his own superior by Earl, the owner of the \$43 million. Bobby and Stig team up, discovering that Earl is CIA and the money part of a hidden slush fund paid into by Mexican cartels. Deciding to double-cross his CIA overlords, Papi Greco takes Bobby's fellow DEA agent and sometime girlfriend Deb hostage, forcing Bobby and Stig to steal back the bank-job haul from Quince. They fail to do so in the allotted period, and Deb is executed. Quince, the CIA, Bobby and Stig convene on Papi Greco's ranch. There is a shootout and only Bobby and Stig walk away.**

pack of grunge clones. Most of this doesn't register on any deeper level than that of nostalgic shout-outs, while the actual language with which sex is talked about – "motorboating" and "hos before bros" – is about a decade off. (Only one jilted character's hex – "I hope you get Aids!" – seems really to belong to the period.)

Put-upon Brandi, introduced being jeered during her valedictory address, has little of the bright, head-of-the-class conniving about her – no trace of *Election*'s Tracy Flick, to whom Hillary was so often compared during the 2008 presidential primaries. Supremely competent at almost everything she puts her hand to, Brandi finds pedantry second nature – but pleasure comes less naturally. Dragged to a college party in a wallpaper-patterned dress by the two friends whose nickname for her, 'Pancake', is one of the film's many references to her small chest, Brandi winds up alone with Neanderthal hunk Rusty (Scott Porter). She corrects his grammar by reflex, but when it comes to kissing, she's tongue-tied.

The supporting cast is stocked with reliable comic players, including writer/director Maggie Carey's husband Bill Hader, playing a slacker pool manager (a character that with the recent, awful *The Way Way Back* has completed the long march to cliché). Ultimately, however, the enterprise rests on the shoulders of 29-year-old Plaza, who appeared in Whit Stillman's *Damsels in Distress* (2011) and has become a cult item with her ongoing role through five seasons of the NBC sitcom *Parks and Recreation*. Her speciality is the ultra-detailed reaction shot, usually exasperated: one eye furiously slitted, a brow vaulted, elfin nose wrinkled at the first whiff of stupidity. She looks as though she could be blown away in a stiff breeze, the proverbial little brown mouse – yet when she folds her bandy arms across her chest she's at once imperious and defensive. This combination works wonderfully well, for her scorn is understood as a part of her vulnerability, and vice versa.

In addition to writing the original screenplay, which borrows freely from the one-crazy-summer canon – films like *Caddyshack* (1980) and *American Pie* (1999) – Carey also directs with functional impersonality. In terms of covering a scene or production values, very little separates *The To Do List* from a high-gloss web series. It might easily be broken up into a dozen squib-like episodes, and the checklist plot lends itself to a schematic structure: a series of standalone sex skits in which Brandi ticks 'fingerbang', 'cunnilingus' and 'blow-job' off her list.

Ultimately, though, *The To Do List* is a sympathetic work, if only because in offering a female take on the great American raunch comedy it doesn't resort to a flip-the-script scenario in which the worst, most boorish aspects of traditionally masculine prerogative and callousness are imitated in the name of so-called progress. Carey's film is as much about the awakening of sexual morality as sexual awakening, with the implicit understanding that one completes the other. If this all sounds over-serious, it should be added that lines such as "I just got dumped because I suck dick at eating pussy" announce a writer-director with a poetic way with profanity. ☺

## We're the Millers

USA/United Kingdom 2013  
Director: Rawson Marshall Thurber  
Certificate 15 109m 44s

### Reviewed by Anna Smith

A drug dealer learns the value of family in this comedy from *Dodgeball* director Rawson Marshall Thurber. David (Jason Sudeikis) is a sworn bachelor who mocks cheery motorhome-holidaying families – but while posing as part of one for a smuggling deal, he finds himself drawn to his 'wife' Rose (Jennifer Aniston) and increasingly protective of his 'children', a runaway and a neglected neighbour.

But *We're the Millers* isn't too concerned with its hero's transformation. It's more about the laughs. Essentially a series of comedy set pieces strung together by a cartoony plot, it offers up everything from a spider sting in the testicles (laboured) to a fake baby consisting of weed wrapped in a cloth (eventually funny). Nearly all the successful comedy comes courtesy of Nick Offerman and Kathryn Hahn as an eager, over-friendly motorhoming couple. Aniston, meanwhile, appears uncomfortable as a world-weary stripper. ☹



Jennifer Aniston

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Vincent Newman  
Tucker Tooley  
Happy Walters  
Chris Bender  
**Screenplay**  
Bob Fisher  
Steve Faber  
Sean Anders  
John Morris  
**Story**  
Bob Fisher and  
Steve Faber  
**Director of**  
**Photography**  
Barry Peterson  
**Edited by**  
Mike Sale  
**Production**  
**Designer**  
Clayton Hartley  
**Music**  
Theodore Shapiro  
Ludwig Göransson  
**Sound Mixer**  
Jonathan Gaynor  
**Costume Designer**  
Shay Cunliffe

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Entertainment Inc.

**Production**  
**Companies**  
New Line Cinema  
presents a Newman/  
Tooley Films, Slap  
Happy Productions/  
Heyday Films  
and Benderspink  
production  
**Executive**  
**Producers**  
David Heyman  
J.C. Spink  
Toby Emmerich  
Richard Brener  
Dave Neustadter  
Marcus Viscidi

### Cast

**Jennifer Aniston**  
Rose O'Reilly,  
'Rose Miller'  
**Jason Sudeikis**  
David Clark,  
'David Miller'  
**Will Poulter**  
Kenny Rossmore,  
'Kenny Miller'  
**Emma Roberts**  
Casey Mathis,  
'Casey Miller'

**Ed Helms**  
Brad Gurdlinger  
**Nick Offerman**  
Don Fitzgerald  
**Kathryn Hahn**  
Edie Fitzgerald  
**Molly Quinn**  
Melissa Fitzgerald  
**Tomer Sisley**  
Pablo Chacon  
**Matthew Willig**  
'One-Eye'  
**Luis Guzmán**  
Mexican cop  
**Thomas Lennon**  
Rick Nathanson

**Dolby Digital/**  
**Datasat/SDDS**  
**In Colour**  
[2.35:1]

**Distributor**  
Warner Bros  
Distributors (UK)

9,876 ft +0 frames

Denver, Colorado, the present. Pot dealer David owes his supplier Brad and agrees to go to Mexico for him to pick up a small consignment of marijuana, using Brad's pseudonym Pablo Ciccone. David hires his stripper neighbour Rose to pose as his wife and they take a motorhome to Mexico; they are accompanied by neighbour Kenny and a runaway, Casey, who pretend to be their children. In Mexico they pick up what turns out to be two tonnes of marijuana, and are pursued by the real Pablo Ciccone, whose consignment they have unwittingly stolen. While crossing the border they are befriended by motorhoming family the Fitzgeralds; they discover that Don Fitzgerald is a DEA agent. When Ciccone tracks them down, their cover is blown but Don arrests Ciccone and lets the 'Millers' escape. Later, Don busts Brad with David's help. David, Rose (real name Sarah), Kenny and Casey are put into a witness protection programme and live as a family.

## Winter of Discontent

Egypt 2012  
Director: Ibrahim El Batout  
Certificate 15 96m 1s

### Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Set in early 2011 against a backdrop of Egyptian Revolution flashpoints and concluding with the ecstatically received resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, former documentarist Ibrahim El-Batout's fourth fiction feature already appears to have been tragically overtaken by events. However, foreknowledge of Egypt's subsequent path arguably intensifies a recurring theme of government-sponsored torture, and the film is easy enough to read as a potent existential parable along the lines of Jerzy Skolimowski's similarly headline-torn *Moonlighting* (1982). Not only are both films primarily about preserving personal integrity as well as physical safety at a time of extreme national upheaval, but each is shot in a surprisingly unhurried and contemplative style, paying more attention to individual faces and spaces than to wider political issues.

There are three central characters: computer programmer Amr (Amr Waked), TV presenter Farah (Farah Youssef) and security-forces operative Adel (Salah El Hanafy). Their paths previously crossed in 2009, when Amr and Farah were lovers and Adel had Amr imprisoned and tortured for vaguely defined political reasons. As the 2011 protests unfold, Amr uses his technical skills to upload witness testimonies of government-backed atrocities to YouTube and bypass official internet censorship, but Farah is complicit in sanitising television coverage – increasingly hard to defend when so many compatriots (including her parents) can watch foreign news channels. Meanwhile Adel is notionally in his element (violent and/or psychologically humiliating crackdowns being his speciality), but his growing frustration betrays the fact that his usual tactics aren't working.

Unusually for a film with a recent historical backdrop, *Winter of Discontent* eschews third-party footage (aside from brief, polemical glimpses of BBC and CNN coverage) – even the cheering crowds in Tahrir Square reacting to Mubarak's

### Credits and Synopsis

**Produced by**  
Amr Waked  
Salah Al Hanafy  
Ibrahim El Batout  
**Screenplay**  
Ibrahim El Batout  
Ahmed Amer  
Yasser Naem  
Habbi Seoud  
**Cinematographer**  
Victor Credi  
**Editor**  
Hisham Saqr

**Art Director**  
Mustafa Emam  
**Original Music**  
Ahmed Mostafa Saleh  
**Sound Designers**  
Alaa El Kashef  
Ahmed Mostafa Saleh  
**Costumes**  
Dalia Haikal

**Production**  
**Companies**  
A Zad Communication

& Production LLC film  
in association with  
Aroma Film Labs, Ein  
Shams Productions,  
Material House  
Film Production

**Cast**  
**Amr Waked**  
Amr  
**Farah Youssef**  
Farah



Tortured: Amr Waked

resignation on 11 February 2011 were shot specifically for the film. Although the protests are referred to constantly, they're otherwise unseen and only occasionally heard – and sometimes *not* heard: the incident triggering Farah's resignation and confessional volte-face is a faked phone-in from an alleged eyewitness, betrayed by the lack of background sound.

Much of the film is set in domestic living spaces, as if to emphasise life-goes-on normality, albeit abruptly ruptured at one point by an officially sanctioned ransacking. Amr lives in his late mother's flat, still symbolically watering her now withered plants. He's within earshot of Tahrir Square but has to crane his neck over the balcony merely to glimpse the street outside. Farah, like many unmarried Egyptian women, still lives with her parents (the film alludes to specific dangers facing women when she is threatened by a machete-wielding gang and then with a verbal reference to "virginity tests" forced on female detainees). Inevitably, government lackey Adel is the one with the fulfilling family life – one of the film's final shots is of him enjoying a beach holiday, presumably awaiting a request for his assistance with further crackdowns. Depressingly, real-life events suggest that the call was eventually made. ☹

**Ali Mohy El Din**  
Am Ali, gatekeeper  
**Tamer Diaey**  
Tamer, TV presenter  
**Tarek Mandour**  
head of channel  
**Nabil Arafa**  
Major General  
**Mahmoud El Shorbagy**  
Major General  
**Hesham El Sherbiny**  
TV show director

**Fekry Selim**  
Major General  
**Salah El Hanafy**  
Adel  
**Mohamed Dewidar**  
Dewidar  
**Kamal Mansour**  
Nader  
**Moataz El Abd**  
Moataz

**In Colour**  
Subtitles

**Distributor**  
New Wave Films

8,641 ft +8 frames

Egyptian  
theatrical title  
**El sheita elli fat**

are too dangerous), where she is recognised and angrily denounced as a government stooge.

29 January: Farah records an emotional video confession, denouncing her previous reporting and calling on Egyptians to take to the streets. She asks Amr (her ex-lover) to upload it to YouTube via his satellite phone, which can defeat internet censorship. His flat is ransacked and he is taken away, interrogated by Adel but released. Adel's family are stopped at a makeshift checkpoint, recognised, but let through unharmed. Farah has a terrifying encounter with a machete-wielding gang. After a dead man is found with torture marks, Adel's van is hijacked and he is severely beaten.

11 February: President Hosni Mubarak offers his resignation. Amr and Farah join the celebrating crowds.



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# Home cinema



Lost souls: Rock Hudson and Dorothy Malone in *The Tarnished Angels*

## THE OUTSIDERS

Two overlooked Douglas Sirk films emerge from the shadows to reveal typically powerful portraits of benighted lives

### FILMS BY DOUGLAS SIRK

#### THE TARNISHED ANGELS

USA 1957; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; 91 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: original trailer, audio commentary by Adrian Martin, analysis by Bill Krohn, interviews with Allison Anders, Albert Zugsmith, Douglas Sirk, Rock Hudson, Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone and William Schallert, 40-page booklet with writing by Luc Moullet, Tom Henebry, Sirk (with Jon Halliday), William Faulkner and Rainer Werner Fassbinder

#### A TIME TO LOVE AND A TIME TO DIE

USA 1958; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; 132 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: trailer, interviews with Douglas Sirk and Wesley Strick, 36-page booklet with Jean-Luc Godard essay and writing by Tag Gallagher

#### Reviewed by Peter William Evans

*The Tarnished Angels* and *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* have earned less popular and critical acclaim than other Douglas Sirk melodramas, but changing tastes as well as decades of appreciation

of the director's artistry in *All That Heaven Allows* (1955), *Written on the Wind* (1956) and *Imitation of Life* (1959) make it more difficult to continue to underrate these two films, available now in superb Masters of Cinema Blu-ray editions.

Undervalued by its own studio, Universal-International – denied colour and even deprived of a press showing in the UK – *The Tarnished Angels* nevertheless offered Sirk an opportunity to exploit all the effects of monochrome photography. There are no Delacroix patterns of primary blues, reds and yellows here, but the glistening deep-focus black-and-white effects more than compensate. Some viewers may have regretted the absence of the lyrical, neo-Lisztian chords of *All That Heaven Allows*, but the music, composed by Frank Skinner, who worked on countless Sirk films, largely offers the narrative (as Bill Krohn points out in one of the extras) an equally powerful complement through sounds that sometimes recall the horror movies churned out by Universal in the 1950s. Rather than creatures from another world ready to sabotage America through communism, however, the aliens in *The Tarnished Angels* are only lost outsiders, ex-WWI fliers and their entourage resolutely

pursuing self-destruction in an inhospitable world offering no relief to their benighted lives.

Based on William Faulkner's 1935 novel *Pylon*, the film covers three days during Depression-era Mardi Gras festivities in New Orleans in the lives of a trio of flying-circus performers: Roger Shumann (Robert Stack), his mechanic Jiggs (Jack Carson) and Roger's wife LaVerne (Dorothy Malone), who still reads Willa Cather though she long ago abandoned the comforts of Nebraska in pursuit of Roger, her damaged idol of love. Attached to the group are her son Jack (Christopher Olsen), unsure of his father's identity, and disaffected newspaper reporter Burke Devlin (Rock Hudson), looking for a human-angle scoop. Monochrome is ideal for capturing the ups and downs of their disorientated lives, and what the film lacks in colour it makes up for in lighting: shadows to isolate characters, brightness to expose their vulnerability, a blend of light and shade to create the ironies and ambiguities of a busy *mise en scène*.

The effects of composition, lighting and changing perspective are further nuanced through camera movement. The panoramic survey of a mechanised world is ironised through the widescreen format, while the hypnotic effect



of the restless camera reflects the irresistible thrill-seeking actions of characters hurtling towards disaster. Dead ends appear everywhere – even the pilots follow a rigid circuit that for flying ace Roger is eventually broken only by death. CinemaScope allows Sirk to pack his *mise en scène* with objects that not only serve the narrative's situational realism but also become the fragmented projections of the characters' thoughts and feelings. Burke's dark and cluttered apartment, with its clouded panes of glass and mirrors, reflects the muddled mind of its owner, no longer the neat and smartly dressed Rock Hudson of *Written on the Wind*'s Mitch Wayne or *Magnificent Obsession*'s Bob Merrick, but the often dishevelled, unshaven and sometimes liquor-fuelled loser (a little toned down from the novel to avoid scandalising Hudson's fans) who gets neither the scoop nor the girl.

In Jon Halliday's book *Sirk on Sirk*, the director plays up the role of titles, according them as much importance as prologues in drama. Although one reviewer on the film's first release described it as a "gimcrack title", *The Tarnished Angels* alerts the viewer more than 'Pylon' to the film's conceptual framework. In keeping with the painterly, theatrical and ludic tendencies inherited from Sirk's modernist past, the preferred title (suggested by someone in Universal's advertising department) challenges the viewer to engage actively with the film's form and content, to participate through imagination and sensibility in the creation of meaning. Even Sirk's more prosaic titles, such as *Shockproof* (1949), *All I Desire* (1953) or *There's Always Tomorrow* (1956), are suffused with irony.

The fliers are not the only tarnished angels; LaVerne is another. She is Sirk's woman in white, angelic in her lily-white dresses or overalls, but less ethereal when sporting a black belt or black patent-leather shoes or, for her intended pact with the commercial devil Matt Ord (Robert Middleton), dressed in a white top and black skirt, a two-toned visual expression of conflicting drives. Often her golden hair is violently swept by the wind as if to reinforce an identification with the fliers. White is also in early scenes a colour identified with Roger, but the small tear in his singlet marks him out as a flawed hero. Intoxicated with the thrill of danger and rejection of the world below, treating his wife ungraciously and clearly affected by the uncertain paternity of his son, this rebel against a pitiless society is unable even in the air to free himself from an inescapably tormented identity of which the aeroplane – Sirk's version of Cocteau's 'infernal machine' of desire – is the visual symbol.

Drawn from *A Time to Live* and *A Time to Die*, the 1954 novel by Erich Maria Remarque (who appears in the film in a minor but important role as an anti-Nazi professor sheltering a Jew), *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* suffered from being seen as a war film. The substitution of 'Love' for 'Live' turned the film into a love story – on its first release in the US the title was reduced to *A Time to Love* to make the transformation even more emphatic. Returning from the battlefield to find his home destroyed and his parents



missing, a soldier (John Gavin) falls in love with and marries Elizabeth (Lilo Pulver), whose father has been arrested by the Gestapo. Their brief idyll, ending in tragedy, is a *carpe diem*, all that is allowed in their war-torn private heaven.

Most contemporary reviews were sniffy (Faulkner's word in the booklet included in the Blu-ray pack is "shellacked"), a notable exception being Jean-Luc Godard's Baudelaire-inspired eulogy in *Cahiers du cinéma*. Though the fresh and touching acting of young stars Gavin and Pulver was praised, the film was often labelled trite, and compared unfavourably with out-and-out war films such as *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957). Complaints were aimed at the excess of music and sugarcoated colouring on what should have been the stark and chill atmosphere of a bomb-scarred Berlin, but the score and colour perfectly bind together the film's beautiful, powerful and imaginative thematic threads. Composed not by the usual team of Joseph Gershenson and Skinner but by Miklós Rózsa, the music recalls

*There are no Delacroix patterns of blues, reds and yellows here, but the glistening black and white more than compensates*

the noir style associated with his scores for films such as *Double Indemnity* (1944), its minor-key brass chords warning of impending disaster. The film's colours may not reflect the bleak realities of a war-torn city but they are vivid expressions of the pursuit of love and beauty by people damaged by uncontrollable forces, surrounded by a debris of broken art objects – statues, paintings, musical instruments – that are the silent witnesses of an exploded culture. The *mise en scène* often presents external reality as if it were a staged dream, trapping powerless individuals in a grim world of someone else's making.

*A Time to Love and a Time to Die* and *The Tarnished Angels*, too long in the shadow of *All That Heaven Allows*, *Written on the Wind* and *Imitation of Life*, are key works not only in terms of Sirk's modernist aesthetic but also because of their place in his depiction of uncomprehending, alienated characters. Whatever view one takes of his films – either negatively, as auteurism compromised by studio ideology or mystifications of social relations and patriarchal collusions, or positively, as portrayals of the human condition by one of the greatest stylists of the cinema – *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* and *The Tarnished Angels* in these exquisite Blu-ray versions are welcome reminders of his powerful, sharp vision and fine artistry.

These discs reproduce the two films in their original CinemaScope aspect ratio. Extras on *The Tarnished Angels* include an insightful commentary by Adrian Martin, an excellent analysis by Bill Krohn and interviews from the 1980s with, among others, Sirk, Hudson, Stack and Malone; a 40-page booklet features 1958 articles or interviews by Luc Moullet, Tom Henebry, Sirk (with Jon Halliday), Faulkner and Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Extras on *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* include interviews with Sirk and with Wesley Strick, the author of a novel about Sirk and his estranged son; the 36-page booklet has the Godard essay as well as Sirk's reflections on the film and the audio/CinemaScope processes. 📺



Casualties of war: *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*

# New releases

## THE ADVENTURES OF PRINCE ACHMED

Lotte Reiniger; Germany 1926; BFI/Region 2 Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; Certificate PG; 67 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: newly recorded alternative English narration, Lotte Reiniger short films ('The Adventures of Dr Doolittle', 'The Flying Coffer', 'The Secret of the Marquise', 'The Lost Son'), 'The Star of Bethlehem' (Vivian Milroy, 1956), essay booklet

### Reviewed by Kate Stables

The oldest extant animated feature film (until someone lights on cans of Cristiani in an Argentine garage-sale), Lotte Reiniger's exquisite silhouette animation took her small team three years and more than 250,000 frames to create. It was first exhibited in 1926, thus stealing a significant march on Disney's 1937 *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

Scooping the flying and fantastical elements from a handful of *Arabian Nights* stories, chosen to show off the transformative possibilities of Reiniger's delicate hand-snipped animations and settings, this is a wonderfully inventive piece. It's far from a saccharine fairytale (Marina Warner notes in her erudite booklet contribution how the film "moves between lyric sweetness and fiendish caricatures of harsh ugliness"), its images jaw-droppingly pliable and protean for early animation. Watching the African Sorcerer stretch himself into a kangaroo or duel with the Fire Witch as a sinuous, snapping succession of animals (a sequence so effective that it was recreated in Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* many years later), you can see an inventive fierceness about the film's set pieces. Filigreed and elaborate, the figure outlines nimbly articulate their characters – Achmed's hawkish profile, Princess Dinarsade's meek head under her lavishly latticed veil, spirit Peri Banu's Botticellian nakedness. Manipulated with balletic grace (you could write an essay on Reiniger's expressive use of head and hand gestures alone, signalling everything from love to resignation), they swoop giddily through avant-gardist Walter Ruttmann's tinted multi-plane landscapes, which give the film a more abstract feel than other Reiniger adaptations. The addition of an English narration for the first time, even from Reiniger's own translation of her text, sounds heretical. Yet the suitably curlicued storytelling is a snug fit, and usefully engages child viewers.

**Discs:** Unsurprisingly ravishing on Blu-ray, the stylised Chinese landscapes and whimsical Baghdad palaces shimmer on DVD as well. Soundtracks are particularly noteworthy here, *The Adventures of Dr Doolittle's* capers enhanced by piercing parrot whistles and throaty pig squeals. While the essays are excellent, one misses Katja Raganelli's documentary portrait of Reiniger, included in the previous edition.

## THE BIRTH OF A NATION

D.W. Griffith; USA 1915; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; 194 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: D.W. Griffith and Walter Huston introductions, documentary, shorts ('In the Border States', 'The House with Closed Shutters', 'The Fugitive', 'His Trust', 'His Trust Fulfilled', 'Swords and Hearts', 'The Battle'), booklet

### Reviewed by Philip Kemp

In the history of cinema, D.W. Griffith has been allotted a place rather like that of Richard

Wagner in music: revered for his groundbreaking techniques, reviled for his racist sentiments. In Griffith's case, of course, the prime exhibit is *The Birth of a Nation*, his bid for major creative status and a compendium of all the technical innovations he'd been exploring during his six years making near on 500 one- and two-reelers at Biograph. After a tentative foray into feature-length narrative with *Judith of Bethulia* (1914, which runs about an hour), *Birth* represented a leap of visionary audacity: a three-and-a-quarter-hour Civil War epic, at that time the longest and most expensive film ever made.

Griffith had seen Giovanni Pastrone's ancient-world epic *Cabiria* (1914) and was determined to outdo the Italian in both length and historical scope. His ambition, though, was hampered by two personal factors of which he may not even have been fully aware: his penchant for sentimental Victorian morality, and his own background as a Southerner, the son of a Confederate officer. Both led him to choose as his source material a 1910 stage play by the rabidly racist Reverend Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman*, in which the gallant idealists of the Ku Klux Klan come to the aid of the suffering and war-wounded American South. The result (as Richard Combs noted in *Monthly Film Bulletin* of May 1979) is that "one of [film history's] greatest monuments is also one of its sorest embarrassments".

The story concerns two families: the Camerons of South Carolina and their cousins, the Stonemans of Pennsylvania. Dr Cameron, head of the Southern family, is a white-haired patriarch, a 'kindly master' to his black servants and slaves. His Northern counterpart is the Hon. Austin Stoneman, a radical abolitionist congressman whose ill-fitting wig, which he's constantly having to readjust, alerts us to his duplicitous nature. The antebellum South is presented as a pastoral idyll where happy darkies slave contentedly in the cotton fields and where, as a title informs us, "life runs in a quaintly way that is to be no more".

That's nothing, though, compared with *Birth's* second half. After the Civil War sequences in which both families lose sons on the battlefield, the "poor bruised heart of the South" is further afflicted by an invasion of Northern "carpetbaggers and mulattos" whipped up by Stoneman, set on lording it over the former white masters, stirring up the naive Southern blacks and harbouring evil designs on young

white females. Order is finally restored when the surviving Cameron son hits on the idea of a militia wearing pointy white hoods and "united in common defence of their Aryan birthright".

And yet... Despite all this, the sweep of Griffith's conception, the pace and vigour of his montage, the visual harmony of his composition in depth grips our attention, until it's impossible not to be caught up (despite our own best instincts) in the brio of the scenes where the KKK ride gallantly to the rescue – even incorporating a few early examples of fast reverse tracking-shots. Despicable but magnificent, *The Birth of a Nation* retains its status as a fatally flawed classic of the cinema – breathtaking, in every sense.

**Disc:** A fine, near-flawless full-length transfer. Especially valuable extras are seven Biograph two-reelers dating from 1910 and 1911, all on Civil War themes – and showing how far Griffith progressed in technical and narrative sophistication in the intervening few years.

## THE BRONTE SISTERS

André Téchiné; France 1979; Cohen Film Collection/Region A Blu-ray; 120 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: retrospective documentary, audio commentary by Wade Major and Brontë scholar Sue Lonoff de Cuevas, trailers

### Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

"A vampire story" is how André Téchiné himself characterises this sepulchral, wax-museum biopic, his fourth feature and an ambitious and peculiar co-option of native Brit culture by one of the most native French directors of his generation. Certainly, the film is filthy with stylised gothic mood; shot on location in Yorkshire, the whole film, from its skies to its cast, glowers and broods with Keatsian fury. The narrative, trimmed down from an initial three-hour cut, centres on mature siblings Emily (Isabelle Adjani), Charlotte (Marie-Frances Pisier) and Anne (Isabelle Huppert) attempting to survive into adulthood in 1840s Haworth, secluded and without suitors and buzzing with writerly ambition. Alongside them is their brother Branwell (Pascal Greggory), whose prospects are the family's only hope and yet whose dissolute habits and self-pitying romanticism eventually spell his doom. The 'vampirism' is patriarchy-mandated, it seems, as the helplessly homebound sisters, occasionally working only as governesses, fume and worry about their brother's fate, and use his tragic death-spiral (here abetted by laudanum) as inspiration for their offscreen writings.

One cannot be blamed for being suspicious about the film's glamour casting. But even so, Téchiné's strategy is strangely arch and frosty – however crammed with Romantic symbolism and atmosphere, scenes are staged like catatonic tableaux, and there's no sense of organic dramatic flow but mostly instead iconic postures and dialogue read in a blank stare, as if in an attempt to evoke a stylised idea of notorious British repressiveness. In one sense this zombified air is an effective plus, saving the film from the emotive clichés common in writers' biopics (the plot-stuff of *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* does not intervene). And the palette does vary: Pisier brings a fierce sincerity; Adjani and Huppert are, respectively, righteously indignant and watchfully timid; Greggory



A real snip: *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*





## BILL'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

Bill Douglas's appearance in the nightmarish horror-satire *Sleepwalker* is as effective as it is unexpected and unsettling

### SLEEPWALKER

Saxon Logan; UK 1984; BFI/Region-free Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; 49 minutes; Certificate 18; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: short films ('Stepping Out', 'Working Surface', 'The Insomniac'), interview, booklet

**Reviewed by Michael Brooke**

There are several surprises during the brisk running time of Saxon Logan's debut feature *Sleepwalker* but few match the scene in which a grey-haired, slightly raffish middle-aged man methodically guts a sleeping houseguest and holds up his internal organs. The real shock comes not from this startlingly horrible image but from the fact that the blood-drenched butcher, his face an inscrutable rictus, is played by Bill Douglas, director of some of the most harshly beautiful and forbiddingly austere British films ever made. True, other arthouse directors have also let their hair down for someone else's camera, such as Jerzy Skolimowski's mad scientist in *Mars Attacks!* and Werner Herzog's villain to Tom Cruise's Jack Reacher, but a closer equivalent of the *Sleepwalker* situation would be the discovery of a parallel-universe version of the Ed Gein biopic *Deranged* (reviewed by Kim Newman on page 99 of this issue) starring Robert Bresson instead of Roberts Blossom.

But although Douglas's particular genius was revealed behind the camera, he started as an actor. In his teens, he played performing roles in village pageants when still living in his Scottish birthplace of Newcraighall (later the setting for his great 1970s trilogy *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*), and after seeing Joan Littlewood's company he joined her Stratford East Theatre Workshop in 1959 for a hugely stimulating year. In the early 1960s, Douglas acted on television (apparently in *Dr Finlay's Casebook*, definitely in Granada's *The Younger Generation*) and played an uncredited Ancient Briton in *Carry On Cleo*. Thereafter, particularly when he entered the London Film School in 1968, his attention turned to writing and directing, but he played three further parts, one in a short by a fellow LFS student, and then, much later, two leads in films by Saxon Logan.

When Logan wrote his second short *Working Surface* (1979), a witty satire on the creative process whose protagonist is a writer frustrated by his inability to depict convincing female characters, he envisaged somebody "with the intensity of a writer, and also an actor who could type". Coincidentally, he met Douglas at a party and, after discovering much common ground (being struggling filmmakers, having Lindsay Anderson as an early supporter), Logan offered him the part and was rewarded by a performance far more nuanced than he had



Sleepless in Albion: Bill Douglas in Saxon Logan's *Sleepwalker*

envisaged. Given Douglas's existing reputation as a fearsomely single-minded perfectionist, the fury with which he rips unsatisfactory sheets of paper out of his typewriter doesn't feel like acting, although he prepared exhaustively for the part. Douglas also attended the editing, encouraging Logan to be more adventurous.

They remained friends, and Logan cast Douglas again as the male lead in *Sleepwalker*, a conscious attempt at balancing his artistic ambitions with a more commercial impetus. Acknowledged influences include Dario Argento and Mario Bava's *gialli* and horror films, James Whale's

*An equivalent situation would be a parallel-universe version of the Ed Gein biopic 'Deranged' starring Robert Bresson*



Archetype: Heather Page as Marion

*The Old Dark House* and, incongruously but appositely, his mentor's *Britannia Hospital* (the old dark house in which much of *Sleepwalker* is set is nudgily named 'Albion') – the latter point emphasising that the film is as much political satire as horror film, if not considerably more so.

Douglas's role is showier here (Logan says that Klaus Kinski was one of his inspirations) and he throws himself into the role of Alex Britain, one of Albion's sibling owners, with great gusto. All four characters, quite deliberately on Logan's part, represent archetypes: Alex is the ageing, sidelined socialist, Richard Paradise (Nickolas Grace) the lipsmackingly repulsive nouveau-riche Tory, and his wife Angela (Joanna David) a browbeaten bourgeoisie, while Alex's sister Marion (Heather Page) represents Britain herself. Although a few surface trappings have dated, many of the debates about still hot-button topics (the virtues of cheap foreign labour, for instance) decidedly haven't.

If its mixture of suspense, nightmarish set pieces (some revealed as literal nightmares), social satire, literary references (Heinrich von Kleist, Edgar Allan Poe) and anti-Thatcher polemics is occasionally hard to swallow, it's little wonder that Lindsay Anderson was so complimentary about the end result: it's certainly one of the more individual British films of its era. Sadly, its failure to secure distribution holed Logan's fiction-filmmaking career below the waterline: since then, he's made documentaries, often about conservation issues. Prior to his premature death in 1991, Douglas directed one more film, the masterly *Comrades* (1987) – and in a comradely touch of his own, he gave supporting roles to both his female *Sleepwalker* co-stars. **S**

# New releases

◀ makes a game Byronic failure; and Adrian Brine, as a monstrous reverend-lord employing Bran and Anne as children's tutors, is an unforgettable homunculus. Téchiné also finds substantial poetry on the moors: a majestically observed sequence involving a cat, a windowsill and the estate grounds outside is almost Tarkovskyan, and the climactic passage when the two younger sisters finally contract tuberculosis (which in effect killed the whole family, six siblings in all) is sudden and terrifying.

Téchiné's film plays perhaps unintentionally like a lavish period-film experiment, a semi-Brechtian visit to a dead past populated by figurative ghosts in the manner of, but predating, de Oliveira and Sokurov.

**Disc:** The transfer and Blu-ray resolution are gorgeous. A bemused Téchiné makes for amiable if unenlightening company in the accompanying making-of featurette.

## CLOAK AND DAGGER

Fritz Lang; USA 1946; Olive Films/Region 1 NTSC  
DVD; 107 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1

**Reviewed by Michael Atkinson**

The Langian universe meets WWII espionage for the fourth time in this spy saga, in which scientist Gary Cooper is recruited by the OSS to parachute into Occupied Europe on a mission (co-written by Ring Lardner) that multiplies and complicates itself with each undercover identity, each murdered contact, each skirmish with the Germans. The not-entirely-serious yarn is aboriginal, of a type that became immediately ubiquitous and became a mainstay everywhere for the duration of the Cold War, but we come here for the Langometrics, the sense of the war-torn continent as a maze-like playground, where 'secrets' are sought after in a never-ending game of homicidal make-believe.

As always, the violence is for 1940s Hollywood exceptionally nasty, fast and unpredictable (including a great bone-breaking brawl off an Italian street with bad guy Marc Lawrence, scored by an opera aria sung outside and climaxing with a conspicuously allusive children's ball bouncing into the resulting corpse). But Lang's geographical camera and abrupt cuts and matrical evocation of gazes dominate the action and muster a definitive experience of the master's bemused philosophy of moral folly and the great game of predation and conflict.

Tender humanity occasionally peeks through the cracks in the plaster. In one lovely scene, Cooper's American beds down across the room from Resistance coker Lilli Palmer, and they discuss the fate of a stray cat outside (he wonders what it'll eat, she cynically dismisses it as ready to be eaten). "I don't mean what I say," she says sleepily. "I know you don't," he replies. Cooper generally seems to be having a little too much smug fun (as always, casting him as an intellectual seems inattentive), but everyone else is perfect in their iconic roles. (At the height of her beauty, especially in a sheer slip hefting a machine gun, Palmer brings to mind Bugs Bunny when he dressed up in eyelashes-and-pumps drag, and that's not an insult.) The first independent product of Harry Warner's son-in-law Milton Sperling's United States Pictures, Lang's movie

waves no flag; as in *Man Hunt* (1941), *Hangmen Also Die!* (1943) and *Ministry of Fear* (1944) before it, the landscape of the war is not a battlefield but an ordinary, ambiguous Europe harbouring secret shadows and hidden conspiracies.

**Disc:** Fine vault transfer. No frills.

## THE DAMNED

René Clément; France 1947; Cohen Film Collection/  
Region A Blu-ray; 105 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1;  
Features: retrospective featurette, audio commentary, trailer

**Reviewed by Michael Atkinson**

A fascinating post-war enthrallment from the fitful first years of Clément's serious era as an auteur, this utterly forgotten thriller is set in 1945 at war's close, and almost entirely on a German U-boat escaping from Oslo and loaded with fleeing Nazis. On this 'Noah's Ark' of supremacist fugitives are an SS hardass and a young disaffected assassin (an implicitly gay couple), a Nazi general, the hot German dame he's dallying with, her fascist cuckold of an Italian husband, a Swedish quisling, etc, and for a while it appears to be the only submarine film ever made in which we'd hope all of the pressure-cooker inhabitants would simply sink to the ocean's bottom. But very soon a doctor is required and so, during a stop in war-torn Royan before launching to South America, a good-hearted French physician (Henri Vidal) is kidnapped, and thereafter his precarious usefulness to the Germans becomes a matter of subterfuge and internecine psychodrama, all under the Atlantic.

That is, until they land in the southern hemisphere and learn that Hitler is dead: connections dangle, backstabblings multiply and everyone starts worrying about war-crimes testimony. Shot as if etched in mercury by legendary craftsman Henri Alekan (right after

Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête*), Clément's movie is a high-concept action film before there was such a thing, but steely with noir fatalism and still raw with the uneasiness of villainising Axis partisans in light of so much collaborationism, mere opportunism and ambivalence. Clément's commitment to post-war realism places most of the exterior sub scenes on a real U-boat out at sea, but many other set pieces, including a Reedian hunt through a Brazilian warehouse stacked high with coffee-bean sacks, are shadowy and evocative in a manner that suits the existential set-up. (Which by story's end turns the submarine into a wartime *Mary Celeste*, adrift and littered with corpses.)

Standouts in a well-controlled cast include Jo Dest as the impacted-closeted SS sociopath, the rather Michèle Morgan-esque Florence Marly as the haughty Germanic man-eater, and Fosco Giachetti as her hollowed-out husband, eventually the first to dismiss the hopes of Third Reich imperishability.

**Disc:** A Cannes winner at the festival's second year but never before available on video, *The Damned* is as gorgeously resurrected as one could hope for. The commentary, by academics Judith Mayne and John E. Davidson, is lucid, but the accompanying documentary specifically memorialises Clément, one of post-war cinema's most elusive personalities.

## FILMS STARRING BETTE DAVIS

### HELL'S HOUSE/OF HUMAN BONDAGE

Howard Higgin/John Cromwell; USA 1932/34; Kino/Region  
A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 71/83 minutes; Aspect Ratio  
1:33:1; Features: 'Revealing Mr Maugham' documentary

**Reviewed by Dan Callahan**

In her first scene in *Hell's House* (1932), an independently produced quickie shot in two



**Cloak and Dagger** The landscape of the war is not a battlefield but an ordinary, ambiguous Europe harbouring secret shadows and hidden conspiracies



weeks, Bette Davis is standing on a street corner and looking mightily irritated because her boyfriend (Pat O'Brien) is late. Her face looks truly disgusted, and this image of frank female loathing still seems unusual. She is very green and tentative in *Hell's House*, but every so often the camera will catch her eyes lighting up and something seems about to happen, something bad, most likely, though it never does.

Davis is just 'the girlfriend' in *Hell's House*, and she played lots of parts like that while at Warner Bros – so many that her restlessness and fury were all pent up when Warner loaned her to RKO to be Mildred in an adaptation of W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1934). A sadistic waitress obsessed over by the masochistic Philip (Leslie Howard), Mildred is a girl with no redeeming features, a manipulator on a pitifully obvious scale, always looking sideways whenever she wants to judge how badly she can treat this weak man who is enslaved to her, and Davis refuses to ask for any sympathy and she refuses to psychologise.

*Of Human Bondage* is slow and strangely edited, and it seems as if no one involved has given much thought to what it might be about. Howard is inadequate, and sometimes comically so. But Davis's nihilistic performance as Mildred is still like a thunderstorm, full of flashes of lightning, low rumbling and one unforgettably massive outburst when Mildred explodes with all the hate in the world at the camera and at us, so that the repeated cutaways to Howard's Philip don't seem to be shot in the same room or on the same planet. Watching Davis tell off this man is like watching any great and fearful natural phenomenon. It's not acting, finally. It's something else, something closer to electrical power or some awesome disaster excitingly destroying everything in its wake.

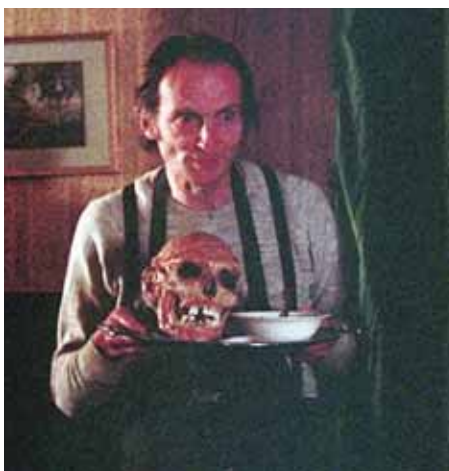
**Disc:** These two public-domain Davis films have been floating around TV looking foggy for 40 or so years. The *Hell's House* disc is taken from a 35mm print from Davis's personal collection, and it looks beautiful after about ten minutes or so. *Of Human Bondage* looks far better than it has ever looked, and though that isn't saying much it's still a vast improvement on all those copies of it on TV and video and DVD where you could barely see anything aside from Davis's livid pop eyes.

## DERANGED

Jeff Gillen and Alan Ormsby; USA 1974; Arrow Video/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 84 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: audio commentary with special-effects artist Tom Savini, introduction by Savini, 'A Blossoming Brilliance', 'Ed Gein: From Murder to Movies', 'The Wages of Sin', trailer, stills gallery, booklet

### Reviewed by Kim Newman

One of the odder grindhouse items of the 1970s, this is a lightly fictionalised 'true crime' account of the life and psychoses of Ed Gein, the Wisconsin murderer who inspired Robert Bloch's 1959 novel *Psycho*. It uses an onscreen narrator to sort a messy series of disjointed anecdotes into something like a plot, but the device also serves to set off Roberts Blossom's extremely intense, surprisingly subtle portrayal of grave-robber, necro-sadist and murderer Ezra Cobb. Towards the climax, as a dead naked girl is hung



Skulduggery: Roberts Blossom in *Deranged*

upside-down and skinned, Blossom gets into grinning-fiend mode, but for the most part he is slyer, paradoxically open about his misdeeds and an intriguing mixture of fey innocence, brutal cunning and bizarre ambition to social advancement. The death of Ez's bedridden mother, a mad religious shrew ("The wages of sin is gonorrhea, syphilis and death!"), is a striking moment: she begins to haemorrhage and the middle-aged mama's boy can only think to keep spooning her green soup, even ladling up the blood and trying to force it back into her mouth.

Sketch-like sequences present three murders of disparate women: a lusty widow who tries to seduce Ez with a mock-séance ("There you are," she coos, thinking she feels his erection when he really does have a gun in his pocket); a blowsy barmaid lured back to Ez's isolated farmhouse as company for his mummified mother and her bodysnatched 'friends'; and an innocent shop girl hunted like a deer to the extent of being caught in a snare and 'dressed'. Equally effective are scenes that rely on everyday dialogue taking on a new meaning when heard through Ez's ears ("How'd you like to tear off a piece of that, eh?" burps a drunken lech in a bar, indicating the barmaid) or unsettling little moments such as Ez's quiet amazement that newspaper obituaries give details of who is liable to be freshly buried (Blossom plays this scene like a man learning that the world tolerates and even looks benignly on what he thought was his secret vice).

The film has a clumsy streak and a few too many Canadian accents, but it's a rare psycho movie which does more than try to make its killer sympathetic. We come to understand Ez but also to see how much his little-boy personality is an act, and we pass through pity to recognise how dangerous and even evil he is.

**Disc:** Arrow's typically superlative transfer – showcased in Blu-ray and DVD – allows for better appreciation of the art direction and makeup effects; this is also a more complete version of the film than previously available on home video – with some restored brain-scooping. A chatty commentary track with makeup artist Tom Savini wanders entertainingly from the subject at hand, while several featurettes and booklet essays illuminate various aspects of the film.

## THE DRIVER

Walter Hill; USA 1978; Twilight Time/Region A DVD; 86 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: isolated score track, alternate opening, original theatrical trailer

### Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

*The Driver* was director Walter Hill's second feature, following 1975's *Hard Times*, and taken together these efforts might be said to create a primer on the virtues of stoicism. The man who talks least, they seem to say, laughs last.

Ryan O'Neal is the titular getaway driver – the man is indistinguishable from the occupation. He's the tops in his business, although the trappings of success aren't noticeable in his simple, monastic lifestyle. Like Charles Bronson in *Hard Times*, O'Neal's driver dissipates none of his vital force during leisure hours, lying in wait for the moment when he will be called to ply his trade. He speaks only when necessary – 350 words in the entire movie, according to Julie Kirgo's liner notes. As Bronson's cool-headed fighter was matched with James Coburn's peacocking, glib gambler 'Speed' Weed, so O'Neal's driver has his own itchy, motormouthed foil – Bruce Dern, a national treasure caught here at the peak of his powers, plays the detective who will risk anything to bring in "the cowboy who couldn't be caught".

The virtues of hard, pared-down clarity are exemplified not only in Hill's narrative but also in how and what he shoots. It has become an increasing rarity to go to an action movie with the expectation that what happens will be charted legibly on screen – though Christopher McQuarrie and crew deserve an honourable mention for their car chase in the recent *Jack Reacher*. But every sequence of automotive choreography designed by Hill and DP Philip Lathrop in *The Driver* is not just comprehensible but a marvel of precision engineering. The action is elegant and unfussy, capable of revealing character through decision-making and execution – the highest goal of the action picture.

At this my own 350 words are up, so I will speak plainly: one of the finest American action films, by a great filmmaker we might as well just call The Director.

**Disc:** The 1080p treatment brings out all the detail of the neon-ethereal city of night in this gloomy, insomniac film.

## HELP!

Richard Lester; UK 1965; Capitol/Region-free Blu-ray; 101 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: documentaries, outtakes, trailers

### Reviewed by Peter Tonguet

At this point it goes without saying that the plot concocted by director Richard Lester and scenarists Marc Behm and Charles Wood for The Beatles' second film is hopelessly daft: in a series of vignettes, an Eastern religious cult (headed by Leo McKern's swami) stops at nothing to pinch an ostentatious red ring worn by Ringo Starr in order to follow through on a planned sacrifice. Lost yet? If anything, *Help!*'s scattershot style deepens our confusion, but the impossibility of following the story also encourages us to enjoy each incident on its own terms, without worrying about its place in the grand design. For example, there is the surreal sight of a pygmy-sized Paul McCartney crawling



# New releases

down his own full-sized trouser leg and taking refuge in an ashtray that looks as big as a swimming pool. Does it really matter if we don't fully register that Paul has been mistakenly injected with a substance meant to shrink Ringo's finger and thus dislodge the vexing ring?

The Beatles enact such episodes endearingly poker-faced. "Me and Paul haven't seen you make any use of that finger," says a sardonic John Lennon as he encourages Ringo to consent to its removal so that the cult will leave the Fab Four alone. The film is at its funniest when at its most muted, only faltering when Lester tarts up the material with directorial pizzazz. For example, the presence of a fearsome-looking tiger is announced by a silly title card (one of many), and the otherwise gorgeous imagery of the 'Ticket to Ride' sequence – The Beatles in black overcoats and stovepipe hats set against white snow and winter light – is spoiled when musical-note animation is placed over the shots.

But for all the bric-a-brac, there is a semi-serious point beneath it all. When Ringo needs to placate the tiger (intended by the cult to do Ringo in), he and others sing Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy'; other sequences feature music by Wagner and Rossini. *Help!* makes a strong case for what McCartney once referred to as "the healing power of music" – even when it is not composed by The Beatles.

**Disc:** Stunning to look at (and listen to) on Blu-ray.

## HEMINGWAY & GELLHORN

Philip Kaufman; USA 2012; HBO Films/Region A Blu-ray and Region 1 DVD Dual Format; 155 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1; Features: audio commentary with Philip Kaufman and editor Walter Murch, featurettes

**Reviewed by David Thompson**

The defiant war correspondent Martha Gellhorn lived most of her last years in Britain, and on occasion would acquiesce to interviews but always with the proviso that one person was never mentioned – Ernest Hemingway. When she first encountered Hemingway in a bar in Key West in 1936 he was already the acclaimed author of *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, married for a second time, the macho, fearless figure of legend. She left with him to witness the Spanish Civil War, and they both participated in the making of Joris Ivens's documentary *The Spanish Earth*. An on-off affair began and then (with reluctance on her part) marriage in 1940, the couple basing themselves in Cuba. But Gellhorn's burning desire to witness directly the Second World War (culminating in her traumatic visit to Dachau) led to a mounting rivalry and their parting ways in 1945.

You'd think that a film of the tumultuous world this once-celebrated couple lived through would need a very large budget indeed, but Philip Kaufman's made-for-TV movie cannily manages to recreate the US, Cuba and war-torn Europe all within a short distance of his home city, San Francisco. This is mainly achieved through a technique he flirted with previously in *The Right Stuff* (1983) and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1988), fusing his actors digitally into newsreel footage of the time and varying the tints throughout. As a device it keeps the film flowing very effectively, though a danger of exploitation is never far off (fortunately, the



Shady characters: *The Sun in a Net*

filmmakers resist the temptation to follow this trend in the concentration-camp footage). As Kaufman repeatedly tells us in his audio commentary, the script (by Jerry Stahl and Barbara Turner) closely follows the words of the people it depicts. But however articulate these protagonists may have been, this does result in some wildly unconvincing repartee from time to time (such as Hemingway observing a Spanish Republican throwing grenades from a roof and gasping, "Fucking grace under pressure!").

That said, Kaufman has assembled a fine cast (some of whom, like Robert Duvall, appear without credit), with even a few pleasant surprises (who would have thought of Metallica's Lars Ulrich as Joris Ivens?). As Gellhorn and Hemingway, both Nicole Kidman and Clive Owen are as good as they ever have been, suggesting a real chemistry between these two giant egos even when the script comes on too neatly (such as a long-postponed bout of sex during a bombing raid followed by a post-coital examination of old scars). Ultimately the film successfully serves to underline what a formidable and brave figure Gellhorn was, and effectively saves her from her greatest fear of just being "a footnote in someone else's life".

**Disc:** Rather superficial featurettes and a tame commentary, but a fine transfer in both formats.

## THE COMPLETE HUMPHREY JENNINGS VOLUME THREE: A DIARY FOR TIMOTHY

Humphrey Jennings; UK 1944-50; BFI/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 192 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'V.I.' (alternative version of 'The Eighty Days'), 'The Good Life' (1951), booklet

**Reviewed by Philip Kemp**

Creatively, Humphrey Jennings thrived on conflict. He hit his stride with *Spare Time* (1939), made before the outbreak of war in Europe but with the shadow of the hostilities falling across it, and reached the zenith of his art during the darkest days of World War II with *London Can Take It!* (1940), *Listen to Britain* (1942) and *Fires Were Started* (1943). There's nothing to equal those achievements in this, the third and last instalment of the BFI's complete survey of Jennings's films. By the time he made the earliest of them, *The True Story of Lili Marlene* (1944), victory was in sight and the sense of urgency had dissipated.

Even so, there are fine things here – and if they fall short it's only when they're judged by Jennings's own exceptionally high standards.

Not much, admittedly, can be said for *The Cumberland Story* (1947), an account of a mining community living through nationalisation; in his introduction to the accompanying booklet Kevin Jackson describes it as "almost unwatchable in its dullness" and it would be hard to disagree. *Lili Marlene* never really catches fire (propaganda gets in the way of a potentially more interesting story), and with hindsight there's an uncomfortable sense of triumphalism about *A Defeated People* (1946), an excursion into the ruins of just-post-war Germany.

*The Eighty Days* (1944), with its Ed Murrow voiceover, acts as a companion piece to *London Can Take It!*, whose transatlantic voice was that of Quentin Reynolds. The earlier film dealt with the Blitz; its successor covers the V1 flying-bomb attacks on London following the Allied invasion of France. Here again, powerful though the images of destruction are, there's a lessening of urgency detectable. (The alternative cut, *V.I.*, narrated by Canadian journalist Fletcher Markle, is included as an extra; it's barely half the length but feels much more immediate.)

*A Diary for Timothy* (1945), *The Dim Little Island* (1949) and *Family Portrait* (1950) are all 'condition of Britain' films. *Island* feels oddly tentative, lacking a centre, and *Portrait* is vitiated by a hint of 'we're odd and wacky but aren't we really rather wonderful?' smugness. The standout on this disc is *Diary*, with Michael Redgrave speaking E.M. Forster's words addressed to a baby born on 3 September 1944. With its evocative images and its mix of optimism and apprehension, summed up in its final words ("Are you going to have greed for money or power ousting decency from the world as they have in the past?"), it links hands with Ken Loach's *The Spirit of '45*.

**Disc:** Occasional projector blips but nothing serious. The most substantial extra is *The Good Life* (1951), a film Jennings was working on at the time of his death, completed by Graham Wallace. No great shakes.

## THE KILLING OF A CHINESE BOOKIE

John Cassavetes; USA 1976/78; BFI/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 15; 134/109 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: selected-scene commentary, booklet (both editions), 'Haircut', 'Anything for John', Tamar Hoffs interview (limited edition)

**Reviewed by Michael Brooke**

Shorter versions of films are usually just that: the longer cut with a few judicious nips and tucks. By contrast, the 1978 version of John Cassavetes's quasi-thriller is often markedly different from its 1976 forebear: it's pacier, much less digressive (the title set piece is reached 20 minutes earlier) and, out of everything in the BFI's Cassavetes collection, it's probably the most accessible beginner's starting point. While not exactly an out-and-out thriller, it delivers more of what one might expect from the story of nightclub owner Cosmo Vitelli (Ben Gazzara) expunging his gambling debts by becoming a one-off hitman for the Mob.

However, this is not necessarily a good thing. Many of the most memorable moments are either unique to the longer cut or explored there in far greater depth. In particular, we see



much less of the Crazy Horse West nightclub and its mesmerisingly terrible onstage routines, despite their evident function as a metaphor for Cassavetes himself and his regular repertory company, living a humiliatingly hand-to-mouth existence as they try to realise their dreams. With some unique footage of its own, the shorter cut offers occasional bonuses (in particular, there's more of early Kubrick regular Timothy Carey's bizarre performance as a goonish mobster), but the longer cut provides a far more authentically Cassavetean experience, as well as a much more rounded take on what must surely be Gazzara's career peak: his hapless Cosmo takes on an almost Shakespearean grandeur as his life, work and finances teeter constantly on the brink.

**Disc:** Contrary to early reports, both versions are presented in high definition, and it's safe to assume that the lack of detail in exterior night shots and occasional lighting flicker are inherent in the original footage, because the rest looks terrific. Peter Bogdanovich and producer Al Ruban contribute a commentary over selected scenes of the 1976 cut, and the booklet is the usual comprehensive effort.

There is also a 1,000-piece limited edition with an extra DVD, containing Doug Headline's feature-length Cassavetes portrait *Anything for John* (1993), whose centrepiece is a lengthy group interview with Peter Falk, Gena Rowlands and Al Ruban, and Tamar Simon Hoffs's short film *The Haircut* (1982), with Cassavetes the actor on twinkling form as a harassed music-industry executive who gets a more thorough pampering than he bargained for.

## PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY IN PARIS

Andy Sommer; USA 2013; Bel Air Classics/Region 0 DVD; 55 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: 'Paul Taylor: Architect of Energy'

**Reviewed by Peter Tonguette**

This superlative addition to any collection of performing-arts DVDs presents two of legendary choreographer Paul Taylor's finest dances: 1988's 'Brandenburgs', in which nine dancers peppily twist and turn to Johann Sebastian Bach, and 2008's 'Beloved Renegade', in which Taylor weds the disparate influences of Walt Whitman and Francis Poulenc. They were performed by the Paul Taylor Dance Company at Paris's Théâtre National de Chaillot in 2012, and are reproduced here with great care – director Andy Sommer's camera angles are well chosen to capture Taylor's characteristic flurries of movement.

In an interview on the disc, Taylor says that 'Brandenburgs' is about gallantry: "The men are gallant towards the women, and the women are more playful." Indeed, the men strike statue-like poses as they cordially observe the haughty spinning and jumping of the women. There is relatively little interplay between the sexes, a sense that they are flirting with each other but reluctant to consummate, which is in keeping with the chivalrous tone of the piece.

It turns out that 'Beloved Renegade' (drawn from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and with music from Poulenc's 'Gloria') is about a different species of gallantry. The lead dancer (Michael Trusnovec), seemingly reviewing his life, is

surrounded by pain and suffering, but he takes them in his stride. When a stream of injured, limping men stagger on stage, he comforts them, perhaps not realising that he is next. Laura Halzack is the "dark angel", as Taylor describes her, who leads Trusnovec through both childlike reveries and sorrowful goodbyes. "Like most stories – I would say all stories – it ends with death," Taylor says, but the point seems to be how agonisingly slow that process is. The sight of Trusnovec unhurriedly hugging members of the company before Halzack leads him away for good is not easily forgotten. The costumes by Santo Loquasto provide a humorous counterpoint: these figures of eternal rest are dressed not in funereal black but in soft pastels.

**Disc:** The accompanying featurette helpfully elucidates some of the dances' key themes.

## THE SUN IN A NET

Stefan Uher; Czechoslovakia 1962; Second Run/Region 0 DVD; 90 minutes; Certificate 12; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: video appreciation, booklet

**Reviewed by Michael Brooke**

The roots of a seemingly spontaneous and manifesto-free creative movement are always going to be up for historical debate but, alongside František Vlácil's 1960 film *The White Dove* (an impending Second Run release), Stefan Uher's second feature has the strongest claim to be the first authentic product of the Czechoslovak New Wave. The 'Slovak' part is crucial in explaining both how the Bratislava-based Uher was able to bend and/or break cinematic and ideological rules in ways then unmatched by his more closely observed Czech contemporaries, and why his film has been so neglected since. Although a huge and acknowledged influence on the work of Miloš Forman and many others, it was barely shown

abroad (this DVD is its British commercial debut).

But Forman's films were never as visually or conceptually sophisticated as this. From the start, Uher and cinematographer Stanislav Szomolányi infuse ostensibly banal shots of Bratislava kids at play with unexpected touches (at one point they line up, backs to the wall, as though preparing to drink the rising sunlight), while the city's aerial-festooned roofs become both a recurring image and an overarching metaphor. TV signals cut through the smog more effectively than the sight of a solar eclipse (which a blind mother 'feels' more acutely than her sighted companions), and gesture is often more eloquent than speech. Fayolo, the teenage protagonist, is a photographer, and shares his creator's abiding concern with capturing the essence of a person through well-judged composition and close-up – his studies of hands are particularly potent.

If the narrative elements are more familiar (Fayolo and his girlfriend Bela's relationship, never rock-solid, comes under acute strain when he's assigned to a rural collective farm and both become tempted to stray), there's so much else going on that this scarcely matters. This is Second Run's most exciting discovery since *Marketa Lazarová* and *Szindbád* also guided us beyond the narrow confines of the internationally recognised Central European canon.

**Disc:** Sourced from the Slovak Film Institute restoration, this has scrubbed up very nicely, and the subtitles are more idiomatic than the ones on the Slovak DVD. A copy of the latter was impulse-bought by *Berberian Sound Studio* director Peter Strickland because the name 'Uher' suggested a famous audio brand, an anecdote that opens his affectionate video appreciation. Peter Hames's essay offers an exemplary blend of close analysis and (much needed) Slovak cinema context.



**Help!** The plot is hopelessly daft, but the impossibility of following the story encourages us to enjoy each incident on its own terms

# Television

## BANSHEE – SEASON 1

One Olive/Your Face Goes Here Entertainment/Tropper Schickler Productions/Cinemax; USA 2013; Warner Home Video/Region-free Blu-ray; Certificate 18; 495 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: audio commentaries, 'Banshee Origins' featurette, comic book, behind-the-scenes featurettes

**Reviewed by Sergio Angelini**

Imposture, tribal transgressions, the sins of the past and the allure of the road not taken – these are the issues that dominate this frequently absurd, contrived and exceptionally violent melodrama from Jonathan Tropper and David Schickler.

After a 15-year stretch, a master thief (Antony Starr) emerges from prison to discover that Anastasia (Ivana Milicevic), his former girlfriend and partner-in-crime, has apparently settled down to motherhood and is married to the DA of the (fictitious) Pennsylvania backwater of Banshee. When she tells him that the \$10 million in diamonds they stole from Ukrainian gangster Mr Rabbit (Ben Cross, donning a white pompadour) has been lost, he decides to stick around and assumes the identity of the town's new sheriff, the real incumbent having conveniently got himself killed in the tavern run by Sugar (played by the redoubtable Frankie Faison), where our ex-con is staying.

With the help of Job, his grumpy cross-dressing confederate (played by Hoon Lee, who mops the floor with all and sundry in a succession of outré outfits), he attempts to craft a new lawman persona but soon falls back into his violent ways, which immediately puts him in the crosshairs of Banshee crime boss Kai Proctor (Ulrich Thomsen), who already has trouble controlling the town's incendiary cultural mix of Amish, Native Americans and white supremacists.

If one accepts that the exorbitant levels of gratuitous sex and gore are simply part and parcel of the show's USP, the outlandish plots and darkly hued characters provide reasonable excitement on the road to a predictably bloodsoaked finale.

**Disc:** The best of the plentiful extras is a half-hour prequel which originally screened online in bitesize chunks.

## JO

Atlantique/RTBF/RTS/TF1; France 2013; Arrow/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 370 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9

**Reviewed by Sergio Angelini**

This Paris-based, English-language *policier* stars Jean Reno as Jo Saint-Clair, the epitome of the burnt-out cop. Saddled with a dodgy ticker and under investigation by internal affairs for his gangland connections, he has a permanently hangdog expression ("I don't judge, I'm just sad") which changes little even when he turns his life around for the sake of his pregnant, drug-addicted daughter. Each episode opens with a body found at a famous French landmark (Notre-Dame, Eiffel Tower, the Garnier Palace, etc), though the overall effect remains synthetic, not least because the capital is seemingly overrun by a small battalion of character actors from across the Channel (Sean Pertwee and Adrian Dunbar among them), all speaking an ersatz American patois. But then this is a show with a decidedly transnational flavour: the showrunner is René Balcer, Canadian veteran of *Law & Order*; the



**Jo** This Paris-based, English-language *policier* stars Jean Reno as the epitome of the burnt-out cop, saddled with a dodgy ticker and under investigation

directors are British and Scandinavian (including *The Killing* alumni Charlotte Sieling and Kristoffer Nyholm), while only Reno and Jill Hennessy, as a visiting American nun, speak with their native accents. High-profile cameos by the likes of Leslie Caron, Geraldine Chaplin and Sam Waterston perk things up a bit but this crime drama remains strictly for the tourist trade, ultimately hobbled by an overwhelming sense of cultural dislocation. The soft, open-ended conclusion seems unlikely to be resolved in a second season.

**Disc:** Flawless transfer, but no extras.

## Z-CARS – COLLECTION 1

BBC; UK 1972; Acorn Media/Region 2; Certificate 12; 292 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: stills gallery

**Reviewed by Sergio Angelini**

Conceived as a more realistic antidote to the cosiness of *Dixon of Dock Green*, this British show lasted almost as long on the air and proved highly influential, not least through the various iterations of direct spin-offs *Softly Softly* and *Barlow*, as well as more distantly related cousins such as *Juliet Bravo* (Stephanie Turner appears as a WPC in one of the stories here) and, ultimately, *The Bill*. Like the latter, the show switched midstream from a one-hour slot to a twice-weekly half-hour soap-style

format, then back again. This collection brings together ten episodes from 1972, combining the eight half-hour two-part episodes that concluded the seventh series and two hour-long entries that began the eighth. 'Loyalties' by James Doran pits John Slater's hardboiled Sergeant Stone against uniformed everyman Bert Lynch (played by James Ellis, the only actor to remain with the show throughout its 16-year run). Another two-parter, 'Breakage', is a typically eccentric tale from Peter Hammond, with Fulton Mackay as a Scot floating aimlessly but merrily through life while another man, similarly lacking in destination, tries for a more drastic solution, with tragic results for the Force. A 50-minute entry from Allan Prior, who'd helped initiate the series after Troy Kennedy Martin's pilot ten years earlier, focuses on the shared group dynamics of the police and a team of bank robbers (led by a louche Harry Fowler).

The concept of 'realism' adopted here – sedate pace and a flat, deliberately undramatic tone – translates into near-somnolence on occasions, though the mass of quotidian detail is often fascinating.

**Disc:** The graininess of the 16mm film used for exteriors and the overlit studio video are rendered capably. Ⓢ



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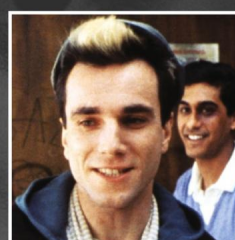


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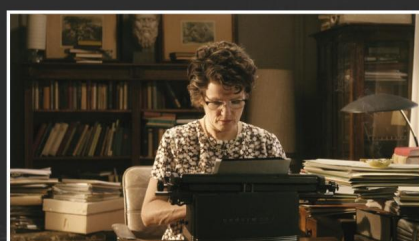
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Silent light: Swanson in her glory days

## GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

### GLORIA SWANSON

READY FOR HER CLOSE UP

Tricia Welsch, University Press of Mississippi, 352pp, \$35, ISBN 978-1-61703-749-8

#### Reviewed by Pamela Hutchinson

A role as substantial as Norma Desmond should crown a career, not diminish it. But Gloria Swanson's reward for her triumphant performance in *Sunset Blvd* (1950) was the risk of misidentification: for many, her name now evokes a monster unearthed from cinema's ancient history rather than a bona fide star. And while it's an error, it's an understandable one. The *Sunset Blvd* set was decorated with props and photographs from Swanson's own

apartment; her most famous directors, Erich von Stroheim and Cecil B DeMille, both appear. Even this biography, which sets out to put some distance between Swanson the star and Desmond the diva, can't resist a subtitle culled from the film's haunting finale.

Swanson herself had been playing the reinvention game since she entered the film business as an ambitious teenager in 1914; she spent much of her early career veering between comic parts and the dramatic roles she preferred. As Tricia Welsch smartly points out, however, she was at her best when she combined both disciplines, in films such as those she made with Allan Dwan in the 20s that allowed her "to parade and to romp".

Swanson had acquired a taste for playing high-strung women in her first tiny roles at the

Essanay studio but, despite a disastrous early pairing with Chaplin (she: "I felt like a cow trying to dance with a toy poodle." He: "Oh, God! I could not get a reaction out of her"), her next move was to Keystone's comedy mill. There she chafed, finding slapstick disagreeable and the lack of glamour depressing. Here an important point of difference arises – to Swanson at least. The fictional Desmond remembers her days as one of the studio's Bathing Beauties; Swanson assured anyone who would listen that she never joined their ranks. Welsch pinpoints why: "Funny women were unimportant. They were in pictures, but the pictures were seldom about them."

Swanson eventually jumped ship to Triangle, where her physical strength was used for stunts and comic scenes, but it was also where she got her chance to emote. In 1918, DeMille



came calling and his “Young Fellow” soon became truly famous, for both her satin and lace costumes and the films she wore them in. Those films, such as *Male and Female* (1919) and *Why Change Your Wife?* (1920), were racy, ripe for the permissive post-war era, and custom-designed to turn Swanson into a star. She was already associated in the public’s mind with sex and expensive dresses by the time she met Elinor Glyn. The *Three Weeks* author gave her a course in prima donna behaviour and wrote her risqué scripts, including *Beyond the Rocks*, in which Swanson sizzled with Rudolph Valentino.

Swanson was a discontented clothes-horse (“let me out of this thing”) and she turned down a million-dollar contract renewal from Paramount to join United Artists and produce her own films—including the notoriously half-completed *Queen Kelly* with von Stroheim and her censor-infuriating *Sadie Thompson*. She was enthusiastic when sound arrived and acquitted herself well in talkies. Her entire career (she had screen credits in every decade from the teens to the 70s, as well as hosting TV and radio shows and appearing on Broadway) was characterised by a productive mix of restlessness and courage. A true trouper, she dived off a dock in her underwear in her first role at Triangle, faced down lions for DeMille and was brave enough to take on *Sunset Blvd* when the role had already been rejected by her silent peers Mary Pickford and Pola Negri. Even her ‘quiet’ 1940s were taken up with business interests and raising her three children.

Swanson’s love life was every bit as restless as her professional life. There were six marriages

*Her name now evokes a monster unearthed from cinema’s ancient history rather than a bona fide star*

and many more romances with the men her youngest daughter described as her mother’s “husbands and friends”. Swanson was a pioneer of working motherhood in Hollywood but not, it seems, a great judge of male character, a paragon of fidelity or a model parent. Thanks to seven decades of magazine and newspaper interviews and one hefty memoir, Swanson has had the last word on every aspect of her life, but Welsch does her best to puncture what she calls “Swanson’s mythmaking” with the occasional barb. It’s a tactic that carries all the more weight in contrast to her subject’s grandstanding prose style. After recounting several shameful incidents in the family home, for example, Welsch ventures no more than: “As a parent Swanson was not always wise or kind.”

Appraised with a sideways glance in this thorough, mostly cool-headed biography, Swanson emerges as a fascinating filmmaker, with skeletons in her wardrobe but no corpse in the swimming pool. The crucial difference between Desmond and Swanson is not one of temperament but of talent. For Swanson, the cameras really were turning right until the end. **S**

## MARY PICKFORD QUEEN OF THE MOVIES

Edited by Christel Schmidt, University Press of Kentucky, 288pp, £38.50, ISBN 9780813136479

**Reviewed by Bryony Dixon**

It’s about time some real weight was thrown behind the rehabilitation of Mary Pickford in film history and *Mary Pickford: Queen of the Movies* certainly gives you heft: its 236 beautifully reproduced photos account for that. But this is more than a coffee-table book; it is a milestone in a collective effort to write back into the mainstream histories Pickford’s phenomenal career, lost for reasons that this well-chosen collection of essays explains.

“The two greatest names in the Cinema are Mary Pickford and Charles Chaplin,” Iris Barry wrote in 1926. “They are largely the history of the cinema.” Pickford was the senior of the two. She had made 125 short dramas and three full-length features before Chaplin made his first film, and she was the first to earn the staggering sums we associate with the rise of the Hollywood star system. James Card’s excellent 1959 essay, reproduced here, makes the point well: “If in her chases, her grotesqueries, as gamin, urchin or *enfant terrible*, Pickford often seems to be doing Chaplin routines, we should remember that it is just as likely to be the other way around.” She was brilliant with money—like Chaplin, the family breadwinner from a very young age—and decided that, rather than lining the pockets of intermediaries, she would become her own producer and later a studio boss as co-founder of United Artists. Ernst Lubitsch, whom Pickford employed as director on occasion, commented: “She can dictate policies, handle finances, bargain with supporting players, attend to booking problems and still keep her mind on acting. It’s no wonder that she held her place at the top longer than any personality in moving pictures.”

Pickford was the most famous and certainly the richest film star in Hollywood in its formative years, and without having been ‘discovered’ by a man. D.W. Griffith certainly didn’t discover her; he employed her in minor roles as part of his stock company, uncredited as actors were then, until the public clamoured to know who their favourite Biograph actress was—and if Griffith would not give her a name, they would. So ‘Little Mary’ was born, followed, more famously, by ‘America’s Sweetheart’. A review quoted from the *New York Dramatic Mirror* in 1916 described her appeal as compelling but elusive: “To analyze the acting of Mary Pickford is about as satisfying as trying to draw a definite conclusion from a metaphysical premise. After much circumlocution, after

*Pickford is Pickford... at no time does one gather the impression that she is acting. She is the epitome of naturalness*



**America’s sweetheart: Mary Pickford**

the use of many words and the expenditure of much grey matter, one is forced to the inevitable conclusion that Mary Pickford is Mary Pickford... at no time does one gather the impression that she is acting. She is the epitome of naturalness.” She changed film acting partly, I think, because her beautiful facial features worked in close-up, and this enabled her to move from the use of gesture to the use of expression.

This last point is very evident from the illustrations in this book—just flicking through the pictures will tell you more about Pickford than you knew before. But don’t ignore the text; as well as the biographical matter there are useful and lavishly illustrated articles on costume, memorabilia, Pickford’s marriage to Douglas Fairbanks, personal memories of a contemporary fan and a piece on the range of racial types played by Pickford during her years at Biograph (1909–12): Native American, Japanese, Mexican, Inuit and Indian.

The book also gives space to explaining why the first wave of film historians ignored her. The simple matter is that they had never seen the films. Pickford wanted to destroy all her early work, fearing ridicule when silent films became unfashionable, and her efforts to adequately archive the films in later life ironically meant they didn’t make it into the archives and circulating film libraries available to programmers and scholars.

Apart from a few champions like James Card and Robert Cushman, Pickford’s rehabilitation was started in the 1990s with Eileen Whitfield’s biography and Kevin Brownlow’s book of photographs. This volume is a much needed consolidation of that work. Equally important is the release of her films on DVD, principally by Milestone, which means we can judge for ourselves the quality of her work. The groundwork is done. The films are available. There is now no excuse. **S**

## WRITTEN ON THE WIND

By Peter William Evans, BFI Palgrave Macmillan, 104pp, £12.99, ISBN 9781844574209

### Reviewed by Jane Giles

When *Sight & Sound* published its Greatest Films of All Time poll in 2012, Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind* (1956) sauntered nonchalantly in at numbers 447 (Critics' Poll) and 546 (Directors' Poll). Melodrama wasn't big in the list overall – *Imitation of Life* scraped into the critics' top 100 at joint 93 (alongside ten other titles, two of which coincidentally were melodramas – *Madame de...* and *Fear Eats the Soul*) while uber-weepies such as *Stella Dallas* were nowhere in sight. In the BFI Film Classics series, the genre is represented by titles such as *Brief Encounter* and *Far from Heaven*, but this appears to be the first time that the series has included a Golden Age Hollywood melodrama. Peter William Evans, emeritus professor of film at Queen Mary University London, has written a suitably delirious and typically immersive study of what must be the source of many an overheated undergraduate essay. Evans's book whips through the production and release background (defying the directives of the Production Code Office, it was a box-office smash based on Robert Wilder's 1946 novel, which was itself inspired by the true story of the ill-fated Reynolds family, who founded the US tobacco giant RJR) to revel in the neo-plasticism of the modernist *mise en scène*, all

mirrors and mismatched surfaces, and its daisy chain of characters, which is what sold the film to audiences at the time. 'WOW' – as it was referred to by Universal's publicity machine – is the story of 'nymphetomaniac' oil industry heiress hellion Marylee Hadley (Dorothy Malone in badass bottle-blond mode), who is in love with her childhood sweetheart, the square-jawed working-class hero Mitch (Rock Hudson, not as handsome or tormented as Marlon or Montgomery but never mind), who is in love with coolly restrained 'bachelor business girl' Lucy (Lauren Bacall), who is in love with her impotent, alcoholic broken playboy husband Kyle Hadley (the seething Robert Stack), who loves nobody, least of all himself. Evans lovingly details *WOW*'s most famous set pieces: when Marylee strips down to black lingerie and dances a maenadic rumba to 'Temptation' in front of a photograph of Mitch, as Kyle is wheeled in drunk downstairs and her aged father Jasper is stricken by a fatal heart attack; and the film's final moments, in which a sobbing Marylee clutches at her father's thrusting model of an oil derrick in front of his corporate portrait. The film is a tinderbox and it may be unnecessary to do more than point open-mouthed at *WOW* exclaiming "Look at that!" I winced at Evans's sentence "The watery setting

*It may be unnecessary to do more than point open-mouthed at WOW exclaiming 'Look at that!'*



Bedside manner: Lauren Bacall and Rock Hudson

of the hotel and the oneiric, shocking-pink-lined passage invite speculation on notions of rebirth, of intrauterine memory and of a motherless son's search for an absent mother", because it seems to me that the real work is in how to elicit popular critical reassessment rather than academic hyperbole. But the author also simply and elegantly points out the film's connections with the dynasties (and *Dallases*) of Greek tragedy, that its overarching theme is the suffering caused by love, that masochism can be a response to rejection and a psychological survival tactic to ward off depression, and that overachievement at work can only come at the expense of the family. ☹

## THE DESIRING-IMAGE

GILLES DELEUZE AND CONTEMPORARY QUEER CINEMA

By Nick Davis, Oxford University Press, 368pp., £18.99, ISBN 9780199993161

### Reviewed by Dan Callahan

Nick Davis's website Nick's Flick Picks is a treasure chest of essays on films and performers, filled with tangled beads, feathers, sequins, sharpened knives, glinting gems and pearls of insight that could only have been rescued by the boldest theoretical and intellectual deep-sea diving. The intimate excitement generated by Davis's writing is based on his ability to see not just every component of a finished film but every possibility that might have been, particularly when it comes to his consistently penetrating analysis of performance. As with writers such as Robin Wood and James Harvey, it's difficult to excerpt from Davis's work because when you descend with him into the darkest recesses of a given film or actor you need to make the full trip down to get the full impact.

This sense of continually renewing possibility in his writing is explained by his first book, *The Desiring-Image*, in which Davis uses the cinema theories of Gilles Deleuze to illuminate recent films that have been or could be categorised as queer. The key line in Davis's book comes in his introduction, when he writes, "Movies, like lovers, have always been more interesting as windows than as mirrors." Davis takes Deleuze and his French scorn for identity politics and

applies his theories to two films by David Cronenberg, *Dead Ringers* (1988) and *Naked Lunch* (1991), arguing persuasively that the seeming elimination of homosexuality in those movies (even if this might have been dictated by commercial or personal pressures) makes them more truly queer. Davis carefully analyses the framing of people and objects in *Dead Ringers* and concludes that all the things that have been excluded from the frame are very much present as possibilities. There is a kind of romance operating in these two Cronenberg films, a romance in which there is an urge to be with all desired people at once in all possible configurations.

To my mind, Cronenberg has always been a kind of closet Frank Borzage of sci-fi, but oriented more toward group attraction than to any Borzagian primacy of the couple, and Davis charts that group romance and follows

it in a more or less straight line into the group sex of John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus* (2006), where the male homosexuality sublimated in the Cronenberg films is now out in the open and rather too dominant. Mitchell's notorious movie, with its publicised "real" sex between its performers, seems radical on the surface but is actually provincial in its sexual possibilities, whereas the Cronenberg films, which were heavily criticised by many for their lack of outright homosexual content, now seem like endlessly suggestible sites of queer desire.

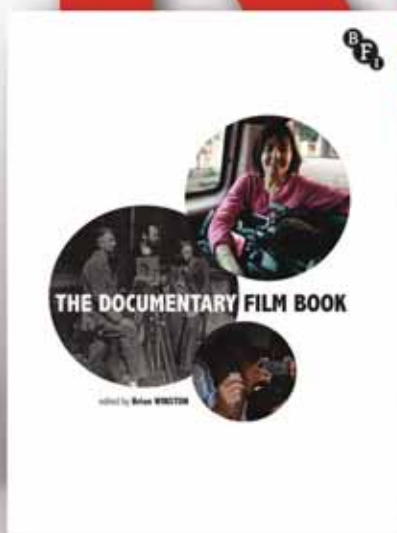
Davis applies his method to two lesser-known movies that centre on gay African-American experience, *The Watermelon Woman* (1997) and *Brother to Brother* (2004). For those not familiar with Deleuze, or for those who haven't read him since college, Davis provides a glossary of Deleuzian terms. There are times in the mid-section Deleuze when feels like an imprisoning influence on the book and on Davis's own voice as a writer, but this basis in theory pays off in a rollicking conclusion with a more free-ranging look at Claire Denis's *Beau travail* (1998) and Todd Haynes's *Velvet Goldmine* (1998). Davis sharply analyses the alienation effects in both of those films and makes a heartfelt case for *Velvet Goldmine* as the nexus of endless possibility between reality and fantasy and the past and the present. Such endless possibilities can feel hopeful and romantic or they can feel very depressing. A firm choice concerning who and what we desire will probably be forced on us eventually, but the lovably open-minded Davis is like Katharine Hepburn in *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) when she says "The time to make up your mind about people is never." ☹



Jeremy Irons and Jeremy Irons in *Dead Ringers*



# Read

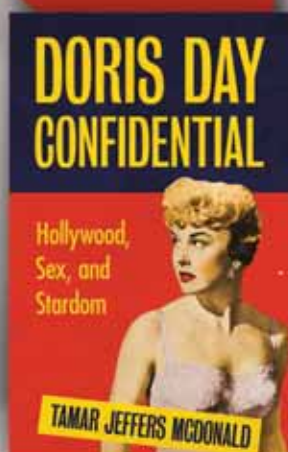


## THE DOCUMENTARY FILM BOOK

Edited by Brian Winston, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 416pp, paperback, £25.99, ISBN 9781844573417

Powerfully posing questions of ethics, ideology, authorship and form, documentary film has never been more popular. *The Documentary Film Book*, edited by one of the leading British authorities in the field, is an essential guide to current thinking on the subject. In a series of fascinating essays, international experts discuss the theory of documentary, outline current understandings of its history, survey documentary production, consider documentaries by minority communities, and assess documentary's contribution to other disciplines and arts. Brought together in one volume, these essays offer compelling evidence as to why documentary has moved to the centre of screen studies.

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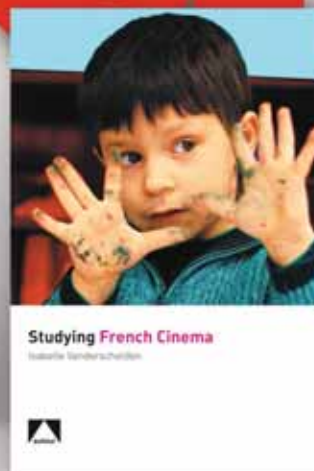
## DORIS DAY CONFIDENTIAL

**Hollywood, Sex and Stardom**

By Tamar Jeffers McDonald, IB Tauris, 256pp, paperback, £15.99, ISBN 9781848855823

Doris Day was a major star during the 1950s and 60s. Today, more than 40 years after her last film, she is often still invoked as shorthand for a kind of sexuality now felt outmoded, being typecast as 'the 40-year-old virgin'. Using newspaper stories, articles from film, fan and lifestyle magazines, reviews and gossip, *Doris Day Confidential* charts the developments in Day's screen persona, highlighting the way that changes in public perception of the star of *Calamity Jane*, *Love Me or Leave Me* and *Pillow Talk* were aided and abetted by the media.

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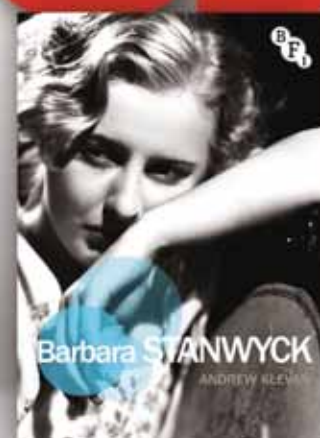


## STUDYING FRENCH CINEMA

By Isabelle Vanderschelden, Auteur, 256pp, paperback, illustrated, £18.99, ISBN 9781906733155

Following an introduction summarising the history of French cinema, each chapter focuses on one or more key films, from the ground-breaking *nouvelle vague* (*Les 400 coups*) to contemporary documentary (*Être et avoir*), placing them in their relevant cultural and political contexts. These include explorations of childhood and coming of age (*L'Argent de poche*); auteur ideology and style (the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Agnès Varda); representation of recent French history (*Au revoir les enfants*); transnational production practices (*Le Pacte des loups*); and comedy and gender issues (*Le Dîner de cons*). *Studying French Cinema* is an invaluable introduction to one of the richest of all national cinemas.

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## BARBARA STANWYCK

By Andrew Klevan, Film Stars series, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 152pp, paperback, £14.99, ISBN 9781844576487

Barbara Stanwyck's illustrious career began in the 1920s and spanned 60 years. During that period she starred in major films of many genres and worked with some of the most distinguished Hollywood directors. Devoting each chapter to a significant quality of Stanwyck's performances, Andrew Klevan explores crucial scenes from her films, including *Stella Dallas* (1937), *The Lady Eve* (1941) and *Double Indemnity* (1944). Through the lens of her achievement, Klevan examines the wider concerns of these films while revisiting classic topics from film studies – psychoanalysis, medium reflexivity, and the representation of female roles such as the femme fatale.

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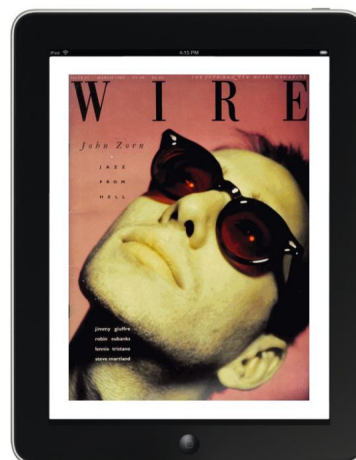
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# READERS' LETTERS

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN Fax: 020 7436 2327 Email: S&S@bfi.org.uk

## GABIN'S TRUE CLASS

I appreciated, and learnt from, Ginette Vincendeau's piece on Jean Grémillon ('Reach for the sky', *S&S*, August). But whilst I agree that Jean Gabin's Captain Laurent in *Remorques* is a superlative depiction, I have to disagree that it was of a "proletarian hero".

Both film and book take care to convey accurately the class distinctions of a sea-port of the period. Laurent was so close to the top of the crop that he didn't need hauteur. He was captain, and business manager, of an 1800hp ocean-going salvage-tug – not a "little tug". He did no manual labour, unlike even the radio operators or the mate, and he was addressed with respect. Gabin's posture mostly matched this.

I'd like to be a fly on the wall when landlubber Vincendeau tried to address Gabin's Laurent as 'proletarian'.

Roger Macy, London

## THE KID WITH A BIKE

Hannah McGill seems to damn Haifaa al Mansour's film *Wadjda* with faint praise (Reviews, *S&S*, August). Worse, she gets wrong an important thing at the end of the film. Actually, *Wadjda* doesn't get the 'bicycle money' by winning the Koran reading competition. Mansour shows us that playing along with the system and compromising does not work for the girl. *Wadjda* only gets the bike through women's solidarity, when her mother makes a personal sacrifice so that *Wadjda* would not have to face her mother's fate and be deprived of what clearly belongs to her.

*Wadjda's* little boy comrade Abdullah declares his love for her by saying he'd like to marry her when they're older. But it's the independent spirit in *Wadjda* that has brought out Abdullah's love. In his innocent proposal there's no trace of him wanting to put that spirit in a bottle – "within the system of ownership". However, as we can see in the scene at the end, *Wadjda* wins the cycling competition with the boy, and Abdullah is nowhere to be seen in the last shot. At the crossroads *Wadjda* carefully considers which way to turn. She'll make her own way in the world.

Hannu Björkbacka, Kokkola, Finland

## RED FACED

Having seen *RED 2* yesterday and read your synopsis (Reviews, *S&S*, September), I have to wonder what the reviewer, Adam Nayman, was doing during the film.

First, the trio of Frank, Marvin and Sarah meet Katja in Paris, not London. Secondly, Nightshade is a nuclear bomb, not a chemical weapon, which had been smuggled into the Kremlin during the Cold War. Thirdly, Edward Bailey intends to destroy London, not Washington. Fourthly, Frank trades Sarah's life for Bailey's escape on a plane, not for Nightshade. Frank hides the nuclear device in a locker on the plane before being made to leave the plane with the case in which the nuclear bomb had been kept – so everyone thinks the bomb is about to go off on the ground.

## LETTER OF THE MONTH POOR TASTE



Trevor Johnson does not go far enough in denouncing the type of turgid, reactionary nightmare that passes for aesthetics in Ciarán Foy's *Citadel* (Review, *S&S*, September, pictured above). In invoking Polanski and Cronenberg, Johnson seems strangely to excuse a creative philosophy that crystallises some of the most repellent currents in British consciousness and presents them as entertainment.

Johnson suggests that, viewed through the pale cast of subjectivity, the demonisation of 'schemies' as literal zombies can or could be allowed some reprieve as art – raising the question of how exempt we can allow aesthetics to be from political scrutiny. True, didactic notions of moral responsibility are

unfashionable, and orthodox Marxism is perhaps outmoded as a tool for understanding aesthetics, but even Adornian formalist, semi-absolutist notions of art do not truly allow for a film that generates an almost propaganda-like level of reactionary perspective and sentiment.

In the wake of the London riots, when we face widespread problems about how disadvantaged young people are depicted, a film that presents 'Them' as flesh-eating zombies, to be feared and dispatched second-amendment style, is intensely problematic.

*Citadel* and its opportunistic mining of base popular fears deserve to be condemned outright, and Johnson should leave reactionary nonsense in the dirt where it belongs.

John Tait, Sheffield

One error in a review might be considered OK, but four is stretching the respect that I and, I'm sure, many people have for your magazine.

Nicholas Geddes, by email

## COCKEYED COLLECTION

Michael Atkinson fails to mention (Home Cinema, *S&S*, September) that the unimaginative Wheeler & Woolsey set from Warner Archive doesn't include their two best films – *Diplomaniacs* (1933) and *Cockeyed Cavaliers* (1934).

*Diplomaniacs*, reminiscent of *Duck Soup* and W.C. Fields's *Million Dollar Legs*, is a freewheeling burlesque which mocks, among other things, arms dealers and the League of Nations. *Cockeyed Cavaliers* is a farce set in 17th-century England. Other notable omissions are *The Cuckoos* (1930), *Peach-o-Reno* (1931) and *Kentucky Kernels* (1934).

All of these, apart from *The Cuckoos* and *Cockeyed Cavaliers*, have been issued separately by Warner Archive.

Mark Newell, Surbiton

## FATHERS AND SONS

In Samuel Wigley's interview with Gilles Bourdos regarding his biopic of Renoir ('Portrait of the Artists', *S&S*, July 2013), Bourdos compares the artistry of Renoir *père* and Renoir *fil*, and on

balance comes out on the side of the filmmaker. He doesn't like all of his films, but I suspect he would agree that the worst of Jean Renoir's movies would always be more interesting than the best of the movies styled *le cinéma de papa*.

Indeed, there is an oblique reference to this in the film when Pierre Renoir scorns his brother Jean's interest in films by implying filmmaking is far too superficial an art to bother the French.

While I enjoyed *Renoir* on a fairly superficial level, what I found most fascinating was speculating what the Renoirs would have made of it. Pierre-Auguste might have taken exception to his depiction as a *vieux chèvre*, but what would Jean think? Would he think that both literally (given the subject matter) and critically the movie was indeed an example of *le cinéma de papa*?

John Allison, Warwick

## Additions and corrections

February p.104 *Les Misérables* aspect ratio is 1.85:1 (not 2.35:1)

August p.90 *Viramundo* A Musical Journey with Gilberto Gil, Cert PG, 93m 22s, 8,403 ft +0 frames

September p.58. In Frances Morgan's article 'Music from beyond', a production error resulted in Elisabeth Lutyens being incorrectly referred to in a pull quote as 'the first woman in the UK to score a film'. This should have read 'the first woman in the UK to score a feature'.

p.70 *Any Day Now*, Cert 15, 98m 2s, 8,823 ft +0 frames; p.71 *Call Girl*, Cert 18, 139m 47s, 12,580 ft +8 frames; p.76 Kuma, Cert 12A, 92m 53s, 8,359 ft +8 frames; p.79 *Museum Hours*, Cert 12A, 106m 38s, 9,597 ft +0 frames

# THE RAIN PEOPLE



Coppola's follow-up to *Finian's Rainbow* didn't include a part for Tommy Steele: it certainly had one for Shirley Knight

**By Dan Callahan**

Endings in life and in movies aren't really inevitable, or at least they don't quite feel that way until something drastic has occurred. Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rain People* (1969) was his fourth movie as a director; he also wrote the script, which his leading actress, Shirley Knight, enriched with various improvisations. It is in many ways the earnest movie of a young man, filled with symbols and experiments and reaching for effects, but it is also rich enough and open enough to shift over time and multiple viewings; that is particularly true of the way it ends.

*The Rain People* did not receive much attention at the time of its release. Today, Knight puts that down to two factors in particular. The first is timing: "It was right before the explosion of the second Women's Lib movement, and of course the first had been getting us the vote. It was right before the second wave, so it was not quite the right time for it to come out." The second, more important problem was a lack of promotion: "The worst thing that happened is that we made the film under one regime at Warner Brothers and it was released under a new regime. The new regime felt, 'This isn't our film, we didn't make it,' so they just sort of threw it out there."

Natalie Ravenna (Knight) is married to a man

named Vinny. She has just found out that she is pregnant, and she feels stifled, unready, insecure, trapped. She leaves her husband one morning and takes off on the road in their station wagon. Calling Vinny from a pay phone, she says "The married lady, she was getting desperate" — she is so dissociated from her role as his wife that she can only refer to herself playing this part in the third person. We never see Vinny, but his raspy, crass voice on the phone does nothing to reassure either us or Natalie. Coppola holds the camera on Knight for very long durations: such attention might have tempted a lesser actress to showboat instead of inhabiting her role, but Knight keeps Natalie as internal as possible. She speaks in a high, disembodied, girlish voice and has difficulty looking at anything but the ground.

Natalie hates herself, but she also wants to give herself a chance. She wants freedom and power, and she wants to feel sexual agency: she wants to get laid. The way the film and an entrenched patriarchal society keep thwarting Natalie's attempts to get laid might be comic if it wasn't so infuriating and sad. Hoping for some sexual attention, she picks up former football star Killer (James Caan), who turns out to be brain-damaged and as helpless as a small child. Every time Natalie tries to get rid of Killer, she finds that she cannot

*It is haunting partly because of the way Knight puts body and soul into Natalie's useless attempt to drag Killer's corpse*

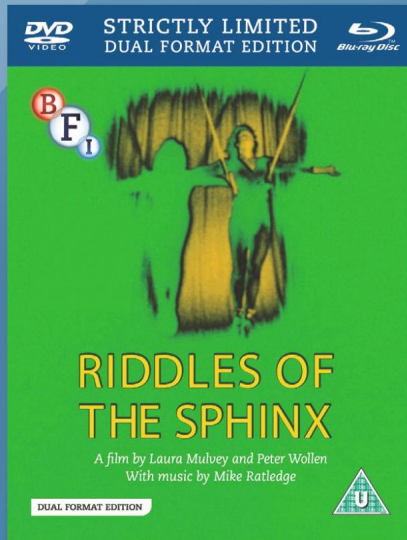
leave him to the world's non-tender mercies.

"I have to have an abortion," Natalie tells Vinny over the phone. Running away from Killer, she gets involved with a policeman named Gordon (Robert Duvall) and is close to finally getting laid with him until she sees the crass and uncaring way he treats his prepubescent daughter. When she tries to leave, Gordon attacks her. Killer, who has been loyally following Natalie after she abandoned him, breaks in to defend her. They fight outside Gordon's trailer, and in the confusion Gordon's daughter shoots Killer with Gordon's gun in order to protect her father. This is the tragic end of the film, and it rises up in anguish on Ronald Stein's lush, plaintive score as Natalie picks the dead Killer up and keeps dragging him along the ground and saying that she loves him. She's ready for the responsibility of loving Killer now, and maybe loving a child of her own, but his death makes us feel like she has lost that opportunity forever.

*The Rain People* is a kind of female *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), and well in advance of overtly feminist films like Paul Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman* (1978), which ends with its heroine Erica (Jill Clayburgh) trying to walk down a New York street with an unwieldy painting, a realistic but far more hopeful ending than the one we get in *The Rain People*. The ending of Coppola's film is haunting partly because of the way Knight puts her whole body and soul into Natalie's useless attempt to drag Killer's corpse, but also because, like some tragic endings, it feels like it might have been or should have been different yet it feels cruelly inevitable, too. **S**



# NEW RELEASES



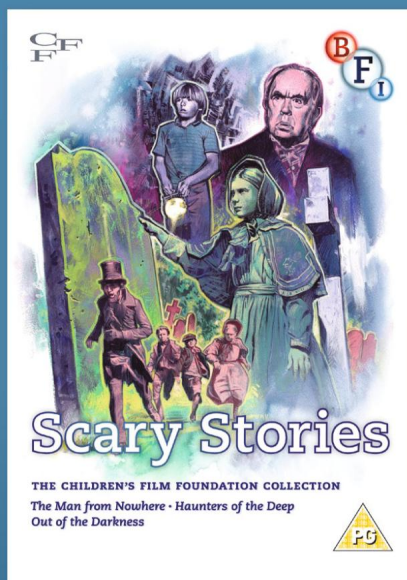
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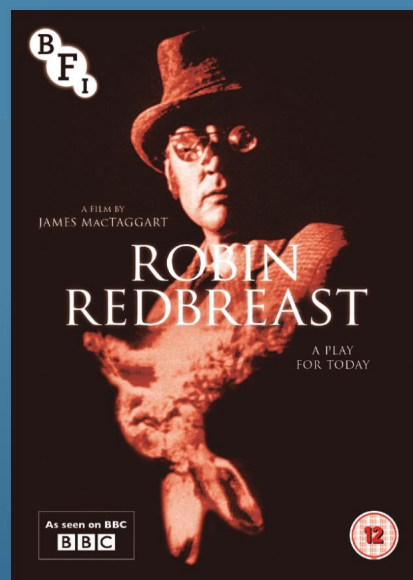
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BFI FLIPSIDE presents Saxon Logan's shocking but rarely seen 1984 British horror rarity, starring Bill Douglas. Supported with interviews, short films and the art / horror film *The Insomniac* (1971).



## DVD

The latest CFF collection includes three, newly remastered Gothic-inspired kids films: *The Man from Nowhere* (1976), *Haunters of the Deep* (1984) and *Out of the Darkness* (1985)



## DVD

Long-awaited DVD premiere for this cult 1970 BBC Play for Today. A chilling, folk-horror tale of an insular rural community conspiring against an outsider, *Robin Redbreast* is considered an influence and precursor to *The Wicker Man*.

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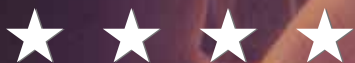
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